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LIFE
OF
St. Vincent de Paul,
FOUNDER
OF THE
Congregation of the Mission,
AND OF
THE SISTERS OF CHARITY.

Pierre
BY M. COLLET, PRIEST OF THE MISSION.

Translated from the French by a Catholic Clergman.



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TO THE
SISTERS OF CHARITY,
OF ST. JOSEPH'S,
EMMITTSBURG, Md.

THIS LIFE OF
ST. VINCENT OF PAUL,
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
AS A SMALL TESTIMONIAL OF
ADMIRATION AND GRATITUDE.

BY THE
TRANSLATOR.

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LIFE
OF
ST. VINCENT OF PAUL.

~~~~~  
**Book First.**  
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FRANCE was, under Henry the third, in the most afflicting situation, when God who, even in his anger, is mindful of his mercies, gave to the world in a corner of the Barrens of Bordeaux a man, who, notwithstanding his humble condition, was one day to restore to the Church a portion of her ancient splendor, and to render signal service to the State. This child of benediction was born on the Tuesday after Easter, the twenty-fourth day of April 1576, in a small hamlet of the parish of Pouy, in the diocese of Acqs, towards the Pyrenees. His father was called William de Paul, and his mother, Bertrande de Moras. Their fortune was a medium between extreme necessity and comfortable mediocrity. Piety, simplicity, and innocence of manners, were a substitute before God, for what they wanted in the eyes of men. Assiduous labor joined to a very frugal life, supplied the want of a more abundant patrimony, and afforded them the means of relieving those who were poorer than themselves.

God blessed their marriage with six children, two girls and four boys. Vincent, whose life we are writing, was the third; and in a family where every thing was turned to profit, he, like his brothers, was employed in the labors of the field. His

occupation was that of the young David: like him, he was destined to guard the flock of his father, and we shall often have reason to remark that he never forgot the humility of his first employment.

As soon as Vincent was capable of manifesting his dispositions, he showed that the hand of God directed them to good. That which first discovered itself in him, was a great love for the poor. It might be said that compassion was born with him. His bread, even his clothing, were not his own, when some unfortunate being stood in need of them. It is particularly related of him, that having once laid up thirty sous, a considerable sum for him, and much more so at a time and in a country where money was very scarce, he gave it all to a poor person who appeared to him to be in great distress. There can be no doubt that this sacrifice was very agreeable to Him, who rewards a glass of cold water given in his name; and we may believe that the choice, which God made of him long afterwards, to relieve an almost infinite number of unfortunate beings, was the recompense.

A good heart was not the only quality remarkable in young Vincent. The penetration and quickness of his mind soon showed themselves in spite of his want of education. His father, who, as well as others, was struck with this, resolved to afford him an opportunity for study. He was a little discouraged at the idea of the expense; but the hope of being one day indemnified, strengthened his determination. He knew in the neighborhood a man of a situation in life similar to his own, who, having become prior, had considerably advanced his relations by means of the revenue of his benefice; he did not doubt for a moment that his son, already so zealous for those who suffered, would pursue the same course. He was much deceived. Vincent never set bounds to his charity: the sequel of his life is an incontestable proof of it; but he always believed it sacrilegious to make use of ecclesiastical property, to remove relations from a state in which God had placed them, and out of which he does not usually sanctify them. It was upon this principle, from which he never deviated, that when a curate of his country, some years afterwards, solicited him at

Paris, to do something for his family, Vincent, after having made him acknowledge that his brothers could still live by the labor of their hands, showed him that this kind of charity could not draw down the blessing of God either upon himself or upon them. He reminded him, that those of his relations whom the prior before spoken of had enriched with the property of the sanctuary, after having squandered it all in a short time, had fallen into a more wretched state than that from which they had been relieved. "And it will always be so," continued he, "because there is no house solidly constructed, except that of which God is the architect."

Vincent was about twelve years of age, when his father resolved to make him study. He was sent, as a boarder, to the Cordeliers of Acqs, who being intrusted with the education of a number of young men formed them both to science and piety. They were surprised at the ardor, with which he encountered the first difficulties of grammar, as well as at the success with which the Lord was pleased to bless his labor. But they admired still more his piety, his wisdom, and the purity of his manners. On all occasions they spoke of him with that self-complacency, so natural to teachers, when they witness the fruits of the labor they have bestowed upon their scholars. In four years this holy young man became capable of teaching others. Mr. Commet, a celebrated lawyer of Acqs and judge of Pouy, was so struck with the testimony in his favor, that he intrusted the education of his two sons to Vincent. This situation enabled him to pursue his studies, without being a burden to his family. He prosecuted them for the space of five years. His modesty, his prudence, his maturity so far above his age, induced those who had an opportunity of observing him to conclude that a lamp whose light was already so bright, would be very useful in the house of the Lord. They urged him to embrace the ecclesiastical state, in order that he might consecrate himself more particularly to God. He finally consented, and on the twentieth of December 1596, received tonsure and minor orders.

The engagement which he had made with God, obliging him to look upon him henceforth as his only inheritance, was not

for him, a vain ceremony in which the language of the tongue is contradicted by that of the heart. He looked upon the progress which he had hitherto made in learning and virtue, as a mere beginning. To advance more rapidly, he left his country, with the consent of his father who made a new effort to second the designs of so dear a son, and commenced his course of theology. He studied some time at Saragossa. But as the differences of opinion which existed amongst the professors of that famous university, after having divided their minds, began to embitter their hearts, Vincent, who had a natural horror for all such disputes, in which charity loses much more than is gained by truth, returned to France, and resumed his theological studies at Toulouse.

If his success was great, it was not without labor. Instead of allowing himself a little relaxation during the vacations, he used to retire to Buset, there to take charge of the education of a number of respectable children. Their parents confided them with pleasure to a man, whose virtue and capacity were publicly acknowledged. In a short time the school became so flourishing, that it was soon composed of all the best and most distinguished youths of the province. Amongst others, Vincent had for his scholars two grand-nephews of the famous John de la Valette, who had reached the pinnacle of glory by defending the island and city of Malta with fifteen thousand men against the whole force of the Ottoman Empire. The duke of Epernon, a near relation of these two young gentlemen, perceived something so wise and noble in the manner in which the new preceptor had trained them, that he conceived the greatest esteem for him. He did not confine himself to that; but as he was all powerful at court, he wished some years afterwards to procure a bishopric for that holy priest, whose reputation was then increasing every day. Vincent who desired, whatever might be the cost, to finish his studies, and become well versed in theology, returned to Toulouse with his pupils. A teacher and a scholar at the same time, to fulfil all with justice, he went to bed late, rose very early, and abstained from all those diversions which indolence looks upon as a necessary relief. By this prudent manage-

ment, he was ready for every thing, and he instructed others without ceasing to be instructed himself. He finished a seven years' course of theology and received the degree of bachelor. Mr. de Sainte Marthe, in the list of the Abbés of Saint Leonard de Chaulme, gives him the rank of doctor. Hitherto we have found no document which proves his claim to this title; but without having the dignity, he had all the merit of it: the esteem shown him by Mr. de Bérulle, St. Francis of Sales, the great Condé, MM. de Lamoignon, in fact, by all the enlightened and illustrious men of the age, leaves no room for doubt.

Great as was the ardor which our saint evinced for the study of theology, he did not give himself up to it, so far as to contract that spirit of langor, which offers to piety an injury which the most extensive science cannot repair. The desire which he had to learn, was always subordinate to his desire of sanctifying his soul. Hence, in order to unite himself more closely to God, he received the sub-deaconship at Tarbes, on the nineteenth of September 1598, and the deaconship three months afterwards. The priesthood frightened him on account of its responsibilities and its duties; he dared not ascend to it until a year after his bishop had given him permission. His father, who founded upon him his greatest hopes, had not even the consolation to see him a priest: God disposed of him more than a year before the ordination of his son. The latter consoled himself with the hope of soon being able to offer up for the repose of his soul, the adorable Victim which takes away the sins of the world. We are not able to name with certainty either the day or the place where he first offered up the august sacrifice. We only know that he was so penetrated with the grandeur of that divine action, that not having the courage of celebrating in public, he chose, in order that he might be less troubled, a retired chapel, where he was alone with a priest to assist him according to custom, and a person to serve the mass.

Scarcely had he become a priest, when he was judged capable of being a pastor; and although absent, he was appointed to the parish of Tith by the grand Vicars, who knew better than

any others, his zeal, his piety, and his talents. But a competitor having disputed it with him, Vincent who knew that a servant of God should avoid contests, willingly sacrificed his right and pretensions.

Some months after he had finished his course of theology, he was obliged to undertake a voyage, which might have been considered a great misfortune for him, did not the saints know how to find consolation in the execution of the most rigorous orders of divine Providence. The circumstances were these.

A pious person of respectability, who knew how to appreciate virtue, and had for a long time admired that of Vincent of Paul, made him her heir. As he found that in consequence of this inheritance, there were twelve or fifteen hundred livres coming to him from a man who had retired to Marseilles, he went thither, and was satisfied with three hundred crowns.

When he was on the point of returning by land to Toulouse, a gentleman of Languedoc invited him to go with him by sea. It was in the month of July. The weather was very favorable for the voyage, and they calculated on arriving at Narbonne in a day. God had disposed things in a very different manner. The riches of Africa and Asia, which the merchants come to Beaucaire to exchange for those of Europe, generally attract a great number of corsairs from the coast of Barbary into the gulf of Lyons. Three Turkish brigantines attacked the vessel on which Vincent was, and became masters of it after a fight in which courage was forced to yield to numbers. The saint, who had received a wound from an arrow, which pained him long after, had the grief to see the pilot cut to pieces. His new masters chained their prisoners, and after having bound up their wounds carelessly, continued their piratical cruise for seven or eight days. At last, loaded with booty, they steered for Tunis, where they exposed their merchandize for sale: under this name, men are upon a par with beasts. Vincent was first purchased by a fisherman; but as he soon perceived that the sea air was injurious to his slave, he sold him again a month afterwards to an old chemist. The saint passed from one extremity to another. He was every day at sea with the fisherman: with

the physician he was obliged to keep up the fire of ten or twelve furnaces. Our saint speaks of him as of a man of surprising knowledge, and who possessed above all the important secret of curing the gravel and other similar maladies. The physician always treated his captive with the greatest humanity. A hundred times he offered to share with him his property, and all his knowledge, on condition that he would renounce the Gospel, and embrace the law of Mahomet. But this worthy priest of Jesus Christ preferred to wear his chains, rather than to be freed at such a price. He redoubled his prayers: he endeavored to redouble the tender devotion which he had from his infancy towards the Blessed Virgin; and full of confidence in Him who brings back from the gates of death those whom he has led thither, he did not believe that he should die in a foreign land.

He had lived nearly a year in Tunis, when Achmet the first, hearing of the talents of his master, gave him an order to repair to Constantinople, to be there employed in his service. The unfortunate physician, overwhelmed by the weight of his own reputation, which forced him to quit his country at an advanced age, died of grief upon the voyage. He left a nephew at Tunis; and, as the slaves constitute a part of the property of their possessors, Vincent had him for his third master. But a report being spread abroad that the ambassador of the Most Christian King had obtained from the Grand Signor the liberty of all the French slaves, those of the Tunisians who first received the news, hastened to get rid of their captives. Vincent once more changed his patron, and Providence seemed to treat him with greater rigor than it had hitherto done. He fell into the hands of a renegade who was originally from Nice in Provence: this expresses in two words all that can be imagined most unfortunate. In general, the Mussulman does not like the Christians; but the apostate detests them, because he discovers in their fidelity to God a perpetual censure of his infamous desertion.

This fourth master carried our saint into his *temar*, that is, a place which he cultivated as a farmer of the prince. Vincent was there occupied in tilling the earth; banished to that

arid and desert spot, it would appear natural that he should have lost even the hope of ever recovering his liberty. But there is a God, who changes obstacles into means, and who, to break chains, oftentimes employs the very hand that forged them.

The renegade had three wives. The second, who was a Turk by birth and religion, was the one who served as the instrument of divine mercy. She perceived something great to which she was not accustomed, in the modesty and patience of her slave. As she saw that this unalterable fund of peace and meekness could only spring from a principle superior to the strength of nature, she put a great number of questions to him concerning the law of the Christians, their customs, and their ceremonies. One day she commanded him to sing the praises of the God whom he adored. At this unexpected order, he remembered immediately those affecting words dictated by sorrow to the children of Israel, when they were captives in Babylon, as he himself was in Barbary: "How shall we sing the Song of the Lord in a strange land?" This thought, and the tears that followed it, did not prevent his commencing the psalm: *Super flumina Babylonis*, and afterwards the *Salve, Regina*. After some hymns of this description, by which the Mahometan was extremely affected, he spoke to her of the grandeur and excellence of the Christian Religion.

The woman returned to her house, surprised and delighted with what she had heard. Without giving herself much trouble about the consequences, she laid open her heart to her husband; and after having related to him the conversation which she had had with Vincent of Paul, she told him plainly that he had been very wrong in quitting his religion; that from what had been told her of it, she found it *extremely good*; and that the God of the Christians did not deserve to be abandoned. A discourse of this nature might naturally have displeased the apostate. But if we have it in our power to quit our first vocation, we cannot stifle the cries of conscience. The renegade filled with confusion made no reply. The next morning he opened himself to Vincent; he assured him that

ne would seize upon the first opportunity to escape with him, and that he would endeavor to find one in a few days. These few days turned out to be ten months: but at length the moment chosen by Providence arrived. The master and slave went on board a small skiff. The undertaking was a most hazardous one: a puff of wind would have been sufficient to upset the boat, and bury them in the deep: had they been discovered, they could not have avoided the infamous and cruel punishment which the Alcoran decrees against those who abandon it, or who are the cause of its being abandoned. All these dangers could not stop them. They placed their fate in the hands of God. They invoked Her to whom the Church has given the title of the Star of the Sea, and relied upon her protection. Their hope was not confounded; every thing succeeded, and on the twenty-eighth of June 1606, they arrived at Aigues-Mortes, whence they proceeded to Avignon.

The renegade was there publicly reconciled in the church of St. Peter, by the vice legate Joseph Ferreri, arch-bishop of Urbino. Montorio, his predecessor, who conceived a great esteem for Vincent, took him with him to Rome. But before entering upon the narration and consequences of this second voyage, I cannot avoid making known to the reader the manner in which we have become acquainted with the first. If the history of the captivity of Vincent of Paul is calculated to excite curiosity, the history, if I may use the expression, of the singular fact which made it known, is well calculated to give us a high opinion of the esteem which that great man had for humility, and of the astonishing manner in which he put it in practice.

Before leaving Avignon for Rome, the saint wrote to the brother of that Mr. Commet, judge of Pouy, who had loved him so tenderly, begging him to send his letters of ordination. As an absence, so long as his had been, had alarmed all his friends, he gave him a detail of his adventures, such as we have related them. His letter was found, more than fifty years afterwards, amongst other papers by a gentleman of Acqs, a nephew of Mr. de Saint Martin. This gentleman, who was acquainted with the strict intimacy between his

uncle and our holy priest, placed it in his hands. Mr. de Saint Martin transmitted a faithful copy to his old friend, being well persuaded that according to the custom of all those who are advanced in age, he would grow young again in reading his early adventures.

Although Mr. de Saint Martin had a high idea of the virtue of Vincent of Paul, he was not acquainted with all its heroism. It was now more than forty years, that this great servant of God found no consolation but in the contempt of himself, and in the rigorous observance of the most profound humility. Every thing that called to mind the labors he had undergone to promote the glory of God, was insupportable to him. As soon as he received the copy of his old letter, he threw it in the fire, and he soon afterwards wrote to Mr. de Saint Martin, to beg him to send him the original. That pious canon, who perceived the object of the request, was not in a hurry to comply with it. Vincent reiterated his entreaties, and six months before his death he made another effort, but so full of energy, so pressing, that it would have been difficult to elude it, or to help yielding to it, if God who seeks the glory of his saints in proportion to their efforts to conceal it, had not deranged his measures. "I conjure you," says the saint, "by the bowels of Jesus Christ, and by all the favors which it has pleased God to grant you, to do me that of sending me the miserable letter which makes mention of Turkey."

The missionary, who wrote under Vincent of Paul, wisely judged that a letter which he so ardently desired, must contain something which redounded to his praise. On this account, he slipped a note into the letter, in which he begged Mr. de Saint Martin, to address the one which Vincent claimed, to some other person than the saint, if he would not have it irretrievably lost. Mr. de Saint Martin, being convinced that we may disobey our friends, in order to manifest the graces which God has granted them, followed this advice exactly. He sent the letter which was so much desired to the superior of the seminary established at the collège des Bons Enfants. Without this pious artifice, we should have known only in a confused manner the captivity of Vincent of Paul and the glo-

rious triumph which broke his fetters. In the *procès verbal* of his beatification, only one witness was found who had heard him speak of his captivity; and Mr. Daulier, secretary of the king, who had known the history from other sources, deposed judicially, that he had purposely tried several times, to bring Vincent to that point, by speaking of Tunis and the Christians who were slaves in the regency, without ever being able to elicit a single word, which would tend to show that the country was known to him.

But it is time to return to our saint, whom we have left at Rome. He did not there yield to curiosity in any thing; but he recompensed himself by granting to piety every thing that could nourish it. He visited the churches and the catacombs. Thirty years afterwards he could not speak but with tender emotion, of the happiness which he enjoyed in walking upon a soil consecrated by the blood of an infinite number of martyrs.

Sweet as were these laudable occupations to a heart of such tender piety, Vincent did not confine himself to them. As, after having fulfilled what he owed to religion and decorum, he had a great deal of time, he resumed his studies. The vice legate lodged him, received him at his table, and furnished his support. He admired him more and more, he spoke in his praise, whenever an opportunity offered; but this was the very cause of his losing him sooner than he would have wished.

There were then at Rome several French ministers, who were charged near the person of Paul the fifth, with the affairs of the king. Some of them, perhaps all, desired to see a man, of whom the vice legate spoke so advantageously. He appeared; he had different interviews with them; they were pleased with him, and thought they could confide in him. He was charged with an important commission, which required secrecy, prudence, and a man who, being well informed, could confer upon it with the king, as often as the prince might think proper.

The saint arrived in France towards the beginning of the year 1609. He had the honor of an interview with Henry the

fourth, which lasted as long as the affair upon which he had been sent, required. That great prince, who was perfectly acquainted with men, was very well satisfied with the new envoy, and there is no doubt but that, if he had been assiduous in paying his court, he would have been soon rewarded. But Vincent, although a stranger to the gifts of fortune, was possessed of the most noble sentiments; and if Louis the thirteenth had not prevented it by naming him to the abbey of St. Leonard de Chaulme, he would have preferred to live poor in the hands of Providence, than to expose himself to the contagious air of the court, in order to obtain a rich and commodious situation.

Whilst he waited for the manifestation of the designs of God in his regard, he fulfilled all the duties of christian piety. He carefully visited the sick of the charity hospital; he addressed moving exhortations to them; he waited upon them as his brethren with all possible attention. This charity, to which persons were not much accustomed at that time, served afterwards as a model to the celebrated Mr. Bernard, surnamed the Poor Priest, whose zeal and virtues have acquired him so beautiful and so just a reputation.

One of the first acquaintances which Vincent of Paul formed at Paris, was that of Mr. de Bérulle, who with great reason passed for a model of sacerdotal perfection. His experience in the direction of souls, his success in the conversion of heretics, his aversion for every thing that wore the character of novelty, and above all, his tender love for Jesus Christ, had gained him the esteem of Cæsar de Bus, of Francis de Sales, indeed, of all those who knew how to esteem virtue. Our saint thought that an intimacy with such a man could not but be advantageous to himself. From the time of his first visit to him, he esteemed him as he deserved, and charity soon formed between those two virtuous priests, strict bonds which were never severed. They were nearly of the same age.* Their inclinations were the same, and they

* Pierre de Bérulle was born on the fourth or fourteenth of February, 1575. He was made priest in 1599, cardinal by Urban VIII. in 1627, and died on the second of October, 1629.

had no other object than the sanctification of their souls, and those of their neighbors. Each had already passed through the fire of tribulation: thus they were calculated to be a mutual support. Vincent was the first, who, after this precious intimacy, stood in need of consolation. He had not been a year in Paris, when his patience was put to a trial, capable of making him regret the chains he had worn in Barbary.

He lodged in the same room with the Judge of Sore, a small place in the neighborhood of Pouy. The judge having gone out early one morning, forgot to shut a drawer in which he had placed his money. The saint, who was going to take medicine, had remained in his bed. The person who brought it to him, looking around for a tumbler, discovered the money, took it, and carried it away, preserving the greatest serenity: the sum amounted to four hundred crowns.

The judge, on his return, being surprised at not finding his money, demanded it at once, and soon afterwards in an angry tone. Vincent, who had seen nothing of what had passed, answered that he had neither taken it, nor seen it taken. This was enough to increase the bad humor of his countryman. His anger knew no bounds. The silence of the saint, his patience, were proofs in his eyes. He began by expelling him from his society; and this unworthy treatment was only the prelude to a vengeance more complete. He decried him every where, even in the house of M. de Bérulle, as a consummate villain. At a conjuncture so afflicting for a young stranger, especially for a priest who depends so much on his good name, Vincent never lost the peace of his heart. Calumny, which in the judgment of the Holy Ghost disconcerts the wise man, never altered his tranquillity. His constant reply was that He, who was one day to judge him, knew his innocence. During the course of this affair, which made a great noise, he preserved such a perfect equanimity, that good people who watched him closely, esteemed more than ever his virtue and his singular talent of possessing his soul in calm and patience.

He who admired him most of all, although much later, was the very judge who had treated him so cruelly. The

thief, who as well as himself was from near Bordeaux, was there put in prison for some new crime. He knew the judge of Sore perfectly, and he was not ignorant that the money which had been taken belonged to that person. Urged by remorse of conscience, which usually speaks loudest in the time of affliction, he sent to beg that he would come to him. He acknowledged himself guilty of the theft of which Vincent of Paul had been accused, and promised full restitution. The magistrate then felt the unworthiness of his conduct, and the liveliest horror for his hasty calumnies. To allay his trouble, he besought our saint, in a long letter, to send him his pardon, protesting that if he refused him, "he would come in person to Paris to throw himself at his feet, and beg it of him, with a rope about his neck." These are his own words, which I have thought it better to use. The holy priest spared him the expense and trouble of so humiliating a step. He had pardoned him in his greatest excess: could he refuse to do so, when he saw him give such positive proofs of sorrow and repentance?

The good use which Vincent made of the accusation of the judge of Sore, did not prevent his perceiving that the society of seculars exposes a priest to a great number of inconveniences. This induced him to seek a place of retreat, where he could labor more easily for his salvation, and prepare himself for promoting that of others. In the interval of which we have just spoken, his virtue met with a new occasion for displaying, in a most wonderful manner, the liveliness of his faith and the ardor of his charity. To explain it the better we must notice here certain facts which we had no occasion to mention before.

When Vincent arrived in Paris, he took every possible measure to enable him to live in obscurity. He substituted for his family name, which appeared to him too high sounding, that of his baptism, and it is almost the only one by which he was known. He passed for a poor scholar, who scarcely knew the elements of grammar, although his studies at Toulouse had been highly honorable to him. In fine, he did all

he could to obscure his virtue, and he only spoke of himself as the last of men.

But even the seculars who examined him closely, pierced through the cloud in which he endeavored to envelop himself. Of this number was a secretary of Queen Margaret, named du Fresne, a man of singular virtue and integrity. He soon conceived a great esteem for Vincent, and he gave such an advantageous account of him to the princess, that she caused him to be placed on the list of her household, in quality of her ordinary almoner. It was in this new employment that our saint furnished a proof of charity of which there are very few examples in history.

Queen Margaret, who was fond of the conversation of the learned, had near her person an old doctor of theology, who had distinguished himself by his zeal and his labors against the heretics. His faith, which had been hitherto firm, had been shaken by degrees. His heart soon became exposed to temptations of infidelity. The name of Jesus Christ, so well calculated to reanimate his confidence, gave rise to impressions of fury and blasphemy, which he could scarcely repress. So painful a situation led him to despair. The unfortunate theologian was more than once tempted to throw himself out of the window. Nature at last gave way. Trouble of mind produced corporal derangement. The more his strength diminished, the more violent the temptation became. The evil spirit assailed him with more fury than ever, and he used every effort to inspire him with that implacable hatred which he himself bears to the Son of God. Vincent was afflicted at seeing his friend in this pitiable condition. He feared lest his lips should at length open to blasphemy, and his heart to irreligion. To obtain the mercy of God, who punished so rigorously the idleness, and perhaps also the self-complacency to which the doctor had yielded too much, he had recourse to prayer; he imitated in some degree the charity of our Saviour, who took upon himself our weaknesses to heal them, and he offered himself to the Lord as a victim. In order to satisfy the divine justice, he consented to bear himself either that

species of trial, or any other punishment which God would be pleased to inflict.

So earnest and fervent a prayer, which so nearly resembled the desire of St. Paul to be anathema for his brethren, was heard in its whole extent. The sick man was entirely delivered from his temptation. A profound peace succeeded the storm. The cloud which obscured his faith was dispersed. His tenderness for Jesus Christ was more lively than ever; and until the day of his death, he blessed God for having proportioned the consolation to his past rigor.

But the temptation of the theologian passed into the soul of Vincent of Paul, as rapidly as the leprosy of Naaman attacked Giezi. The first impressions of an evil, which is never felt so much as when we are personally assailed by it, appeared to astonish him. The new Job seemed to be a prey to all the furies of the devil: but far from losing courage, he knew how to make them useful. For that purpose, he made it a law to act always in opposition to what was suggested to him by the seducer. During four years that he had to groan under the weight of this severe trial, he paid with new ardor to the Son of God all the honor that he could render him; and in the hospitals, he served him in the person of the poor, who are his members, with a zealous fervor, of which the most tranquil faith is scarcely capable. At last God restored him to peace, and it was a new effort of charity, that merited it for him. One day when he was reflecting upon the violence of the evil and the means of arresting it, he took a ~~firm~~ and inviolable resolution to consecrate all his life to the service of the afflicted. Scarcely had he taken this great resolution, when the temptation vanished; and his heart tasted a sweet and perfect liberty. He even received the gift of calming those who were tried, as he himself had been. A virtuous priest who knew it by experience, gives testimony of it. The sequel of his history does not permit us to doubt it.

To augment the favors with which God recompensed his patience and fidelity, Vincent determined on leading a more retired life, and joining Mr. de Bérulle. The latter was

at that time entirely occupied in establishing his congregation, and in assembling chosen ministers, zealous for the glory of the God Man, who being the Eternal Priest, according to the order of Melchisedech, is the primitive source of the priesthood of the new law. This wise and virtuous director, to whom our saint laid open all the avenues of his soul, perceived at once that he was called to something great: he even predicted that God would make use of him, to form a new company of priests, who would cultivate the vineyard of the Lord with great fruit and benediction.

Some time afterwards, he gave him charge, in spite of his repugnance, of the parish of Clichy, a village situated a league from the capital. Vincent soon proved how well calculated he was for that duty. Sermons, catechism, assiduity in the tribunal of penance, were his ordinary occupations. He was to be seen visiting the sick, consoling the afflicted, relieving the poor, restoring the peace of families, strengthening the weak, making himself all to all, to gain all to Jesus Christ.

The most efficacious means, and that which gave the greatest weight to his discourses, was his good example. But as extreme regularity has in it something revolting, he tempered it by attentions of mildness and affability. He painted virtue in colors so beautiful, that it appeared to be full of attractions, and he applied to the crosses with which the road to heaven is strewn, all the unction which can mitigate their asperity. Such prudent conduct conciliated all minds and hearts. The poor, who composed nearly his entire flock, loved him as their father; and the citizens of Paris who had country-seats in his parish, respected him as a saint. The neighboring curates conceived the greatest esteem for him. They consulted him in their doubts, and took a pleasure in learning from him the manner of performing their functions well. In general, it was enough to see him, to form the highest idea of him; and a doctor, who in his time preached at Clichy, repeated more than once that his parishioners *universally lived like angels*. On such occasions the eulogium of the flock is always that of the vigilance of the pastor and of his labors.

When he saw his people docile to his regulations, he

formed a design, the execution of which must be very difficult. His church was falling to ruins: it was without ornaments; and his parishioners who were not rich, could not, without great inconvenience, contribute to repairs which would be very expensive. Vincent himself was poor, and he could not be otherwise, for he was in the habit of giving all he had to those who were in indigence. These obstacles did not stop him; he had his church entirely rebuilt; he supplied it with furniture and ornaments, so that the offices could be performed in it with that decency, which contributes so much to the dignity of worship and to the edification of the people. And what is most singular, none of the expense fell upon the parishioners. There was then in Paris a number of virtuous men, who employed themselves in works of piety; and it gave them pleasure to second the good intentions of a man, who sought nothing but the greatest glory of God.

To increase it more and more, he established the confraternity of the Rosary, being well persuaded that the honor rendered to the Mother of God, cannot but be very agreeable to her Son. Afterwards, he induced his successor to educate several young clergymen, who, being formed early to the functions of their state, might perform the ceremonies of the church in a manner worthy of Him who is there adored. He himself chose in Paris and elsewhere, those whom he judged most likely to succeed. Thus, although he was sooner obliged than he expected, to quit people so dear to him, he continued to fulfil in their regard the duties of a tender and disinterested pastor. We shall now give an account of the motives which obliged him to separate from his flock.

Although piety was rare enough at court during the minority of Louis the thirteenth, there were nevertheless persons to be found there, whose regularity might serve as a model in happier times. We must place in this number Philip Emmanuel de Gondi, count of Joigni, general of the gallies of France. This nobleman had married Françoise Marguerite de Silly, eldest daughter of the count de la Rochepot, governor of Anjou. She was one of the most accomplished ladies of the age; pious, compassionate, generous, she had no other desire

than that of honoring God, and causing him to be honored by all those whom Providence had committed to her care. But as nothing interests a truly Christian mother more than the education of her children, Madame de Gondi made it a principal point with her. That she might not be deceived in so essential and decisive a choice, she begged Mr. de Bérulle to give her one of his congregation, who would be able to form to piety and science three of her children, who, more than any one else, stood in need of both, because they were destined by their birth to possess the first dignities in church and state which in fact, two of them attained. As to the third, we know only enough of him, to regret him. Scarcely had he reached the age of ten or twelve years, when God delivered him from the corruption of the world, by bestowing upon him a more happy portion in heaven, than he could have found upon earth.

Mr. de Bérulle, instead of granting one of his priests, cast his eyes upon Vincent of Paul, and induced him to enter the house of Gondi, at least upon trial. The saint, who sought nothing but obedience, sacrificed to the desire of his director his taste for the poor, and his repugnance to mixing with the great ones of the world. At the end of 1613, he commenced the education of the young Gondis.

To sanctify himself in this new office, he proposed to himself to honor Jesus Christ in the person of Mr. de Gondi, the Blessed Virgin in that of his virtuous wife, and the disciples of our Saviour in those of the officers and inferior domestics. He candidly acknowledged that this manner of acting, which appears extremely simple, was of great service to him; and that, seeing God alone under different aspects in all the persons with whom he was habitually engaged, this obliged him to do nothing before men, which he would not have done before the Son of God, had he had the happiness of conversing with him in the days of his mortal life.

Although a house, like that of the general of the gallies, in which there was a great number of persons, naturally abounded in temptations to dissipation, the saint lived partly as if he had been in the deserts of the Thebaide. He took

great care to meddle with nothing except what concerned the education of his pupils. His maxim was, that persons do not hold out against the dangers with which the houses of the great are filled, unless they prepare to resist them by silence and recollection. Yet he sacrificed without hesitation the delights of his retreat to the necessity of his neighbor. He established peace among the domestics; he visited them when they were sick, and after having consoled them, performed the meanest offices for them. Some days before every feast, he assembled them and instructed them in the mysteries which the Church was to celebrate. He taught them how to sanctify those precious days, which, through a misfortune we cannot sufficiently deplore, are generally for masters as well as for those who serve them, days of libertinism, or at least of idleness. He followed the same plan in the country; but he there gave his zeal a greater range. When the general of the gallies took him with his family to his possessions of Joigny, Montmirel and Villepreux, he gave all the time he had to spare, to the instruction of the villagers, who generally stood in great need of it. He preached and taught catechism, he administered the sacraments, and particularly that of penance: in a word, he did for them every thing that the most active pastor could do for his flock. It may easily be supposed that a man so zealous for the salvation of all those who belonged to the house of Gondi, did not neglect those who were at the head of it. He did not suffer any occasion to escape him, for keeping up and animating the great inclination which they had for virtue. His respect for them was not mingled with that base and timid complaisance, which causes some to dissemble an evil, which firmness tempered by proper management, is able to arrest. We will mention an example which is glorious for him. Mr. de Gondi received, or imagined he had received a great affront from a nobleman of the court. His virtue and delicacy of conscience were not proof against a temptation so fatal to many others. The glory of his house, the recollection of the invincible courage of the Marshal de Retz his father, the high rank which he himself held in the kingdom; all these

motives presented themselves to his imagination, and determined him to wash out, in the blood of his enemy, the outrage which he thought he had received. Duels, although recently prohibited anew by Henry the fourth, under penalty of treason, were then so common, as scarcely to be a matter of scruple. We would be almost tempted to believe that some persons looked upon them as acts of virtue. They went commonly to the church, before engaging in them; and seriously recommended to God an affair, the thought of which is an abominable crime in his eyes.

Mr. de Gondi followed that plan: he heard mass with all the devotion of a man resolved to fight immediately afterwards. He even remained in the chapel longer than usual. Vincent of Paul took advantage of this moment. "Suffer me, sir," said he to the general, at the same time throwing himself at his feet, "suffer me to say one word to you in all humility. I know from a good source that you are going to fight a duel. But I declare to you in the name of my Saviour, whom you have just adored, that if you do not relinquish that wicked design, he will exercise his justice upon you and upon all your posterity." After these words, to which the fire of charity gave greater weight, Vincent withdrew like a man overwhelmed at once with grief and horror; well resolved however to take other steps, if what he had done should not prove sufficient. But nothing further was necessary. Conscience spoke, and Mr. de Gondi surrendered his revenge to him who has reserved to himself the right of exercising it.

If this action was very honorable to our saint, the whole of his conduct was no less so. His regularity, his modesty, his tact in banishing even from table useless conversations, and substituting, without any affectation, those which were edifying; in a word, his virtues, gained him every heart. There was but one opinion with regard to him in the whole family, and never was the almoner of a great lord more universally respected.

Madame de Gondi knew his value more than any person; and he had scarcely been a year in her house, when she resolved to have him for her director. As the perfect knowledge

which she already had of his humility, enabled her to judge that he would discover a thousand reasons for declining the charge, she addressed herself to Mr. de Bérulle, and begged him to act for her. This was the surest means to overcome all obstacles: so that, although the choice much afflicted the holy priest, he resisted no longer, after resistance had been forbidden.

Virtuous as this lady was at the time when she placed herself under the direction of Vincent of Paul, it was soon evident how much a man full of the spirit of God and who seeks nothing but his glory, can do in the guidance of souls. Madame de Gondî applied herself with new ardor to the practice of the sublimest virtues. Besides the great alms which she distributed, she carefully visited the sick, and thought it an honor to wait on them. She employed no officers on her domains, but such as were of acknowledged probity. She settled the disputes of her vassals amicably, as much as was possible. In fine, she spared neither expense nor trouble, in order to cause God to be honored in every place depending on her. Mr. de Gondî was associated in all her good works, but his duties, calling him sometimes to the court, and sometimes to the extremity of the kingdom, Vincent often took his place in a great number of holy projects. He was the soul, the counsellor of his virtuous penitent. He labored in his sphere, whilst she was occupied in hers. One would have supposed that he had the talent of multiplying himself, so opportunely was he found in all the places, where he was personally required.

One day, after his recovery from a painful sickness, he went with Madame de Gondî to the chateau of Folleville, when some persons came to intreat him to go to Gannes, a small village about two leagues off. It was to hear the confession of a countryman, who was dangerously ill, and who had said that he would die contented, if he could have the advantage of unbosoming himself to our holy Priest. Vincent did not delay a moment. The neighbors of the dying man, gave him a very good character. God, who sees the heart, judged very differently. The unfortunate man had his con-

science burdened with several mortal sins, which false shame had always prevented him from making known. Whilst the saint was with him, the thought struck him to induce the man to make a general confession. This thought came from God. The sick man, encouraged by the mildness with which his new director treated him, made an effort, and at last declared those secret crimes, which he had never had the strength to discover to any one. This candor, so necessary for a man who was on the point of falling into the hands of the Sovereign Judge, was followed by inexpressible consolation. The penitent found himself relieved from an enormous weight, which had oppressed him for many years. But the most remarkable thing was, that he went from one extreme to the other: and during three days that he still lived, he several times made a kind of public confession of those disorders, which he had so long suppressed, even in the tribunal of penance. The countess of Joigni having gone to visit him according to her custom: "Ah! madam," he exclaimed, as soon as he perceived her, "I should have been damned, if I had not made a general confession, on account of the many grievous sins which I had not dared to confess."

This painful acknowledgment edified those who witnessed it; but the countess, who, with regard to the affairs of salvation, was possessed of light far superior to that of the multitude, was greatly alarmed. "What is this, sir?" she said to Vincent of Paul. "What have we heard? How much is it to be feared that this may be the case with many of these poor people! Ah! if this man, who passed for a good man, was in a state of damnation, what must it be with others who live so badly? Ah! sir, how many souls are lost! Where is the remedy for this?"

In consequence of these reflections, she begged of our saint to deliver a discourse to the people of Folleville, on the utility of general confessions. He did so on the twenty-fifth of January 1617, the day on which the Church honors the conversion of St. Paul; and God gave such power to his words, that every one hastened to examine his conscience in the bitterness of his heart. After having instructed them solidly,

Vincent set himself about hearing their confessions; but the crowd was so great, that he was obliged to obtain aid from Amiens. The zeal of two other priests who joined him, had enough to occupy it. The harvest was so abundant, that these three laborers, who wished to reap the whole, had scarcely a moment to themselves. As soon as they had finished at Folleville, they commenced in the other villages of the same canton. The concourse was similar, and God bestowed the most abundant benediction upon their labors.

This mission of Folleville was the first that Vincent of Paul made. Every year on the twenty-fifth of January, he celebrated it with sentiments of the most lively gratitude, and he returned to God his humble thanksgiving, that the day of the conversion of St. Paul was that on which his congregation had been in a manner conceived. Madame de Gondî, charmed with this happy essay and with the immense fruits to which it gave rise, proposed to herself from that time, to found missions for all her possessions. We shall see hereafter how this design was put in execution.

The joy which that pious lady experienced at the sight of the great good, which our Saint had just effected in a portion of her domains, was soon afterwards troubled by one of the severest trials she had ever experienced; and that rigorous trial came from the man, who most honored her in the world, I mean from Vincent of Paul himself.

Although that worthy priest had obtained the good will of the whole house of Gondî, as soon as he was known; yet his virtue, which shone more brightly every day, the visible benediction, which God showered upon the most ungrateful soil, from the time he undertook to cultivate it; in a word, his charity, his labors, his success, made so great an impression upon those with whom he lived, that he was unanimously looked upon as the tutelar angel of the family. Although precautions were taken not to alarm his modesty, he was treated with such marked distinction, that even strangers immediately knew the opinion that all had of him. These sentiments, which would have flattered a man less solidly virtuous, were torments for him. He feared lest the rock of vain glory would occa-

sion the same shipwreck to him, which it had occasioned to so many others, who appeared to have arrived at the highest pitch of virtue. The example of a great number of saints, who in conjunctures less perilous, believed it their duty to retreat, presented itself forcibly to his mind, and he resolved to imitate them.

There was still another reason which determined him. God had a long time tried Madame de Gondi by interior pains, so violent and fatiguing, that 'she was often reduced to the greatest extremities. Vincent, who united a correct judgment to much experience, calmed her uneasiness; and although from time to time her trials revived, she had the consolation of being near a confidential man, who understood her even before she spoke. The holy priest performed with joy these duties of charity, which he would not have refused to the lowest servant; but he could not suffer that Madame de Gondi should look upon him as necessary to her. The attention which she showed to a miserable being (for this was the name he gave himself), afflicted him sensibly. Still it increased every day. The lady bore his absence with difficulty; and her alarmed imagination prompted her often to ask herself what would become of her, if she had the misfortune of being without him, when God would think proper to call her to himself.

Vincent looked upon this excess of alarm as an imperfection, and he endeavored to eradicate it from a soul which was so dear to him. In order to succeed in it, he obliged her to address herself sometimes to another confessor, and above all to a Franciscan friar, with whose wisdom he was acquainted. He forced her to acknowledge, that she had been satisfied with him; and he took advantage of this trial to convince her that God would guide her as well by the ministry of another as by his, if she knew how to place confidence in his infinite goodness.

But neither her past experience, nor the reasons furnished by the saint, could induce that virtuous lady to give up her first impressions; and Vincent, who could not bear that any one should have the least attachment to his particular guidance, became more and more confirmed in his design of withdrawing.

As he had gone to the house of Madame de Gondi, only at the persuasion of Father de Bérulle, he was unwilling to leave her without informing him of it. But he did not enter into a detail of the motives by which he was actuated. He contented himself with saying that he felt himself interiorly urged to give himself up entirely in some distant province, to the instruction and service of the poor country people. Father de Bérulle, who knew how upright the saint was towards God, concluded that so prudent a man would not quit his post but for just reasons: hence he did not oppose this change, which would otherwise have afflicted him. Seeing then that Vincent's zeal had no determined object, he proposed to him to go and labor at Châtillon-les-Dombes. He assured him that he would there find employment enough, and he was not deceived. For more than a century, that town, surrendered to mercenaries who only came thither to collect the revenue, had not had, properly speaking, either curate or pastor.

Vincent accepted this charge; and having left Paris under pretext of a small journey, he took the road to Lyons. A priest of the oratory gave him letters of recommendation for the Sieur Beynier, who, although a calvinist, furnished him with lodging for some time, because the presbytery was almost in ruins. Beynier received a hundred fold the fruit of his charitable care, as we shall see hereafter.

Some time after his arrival at Châtillon, the saint gave notice of it to the general of the gallies, who was then in Provence, and begged of him to acquiesce in his retreat. He endeavored to persuade him that he had not the talents necessary to educate his children, and he acknowledged that he had left his house without notifying Madame de Gondi of his intention to return no more.

The general, who loved virtue, and who calculated on making new progress in it under the auspices of Vincent, was very much afflicted at his retreat, or rather he was inconsolable; and it was in a style of the greatest grief that he wrote to Madame de Gondi, begging her to employ every means, to induce him to return to his house.

It was on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, that the

countess received the letter. She was as much struck by it, as is the traveller by a clap of thunder when he least expects it. She shed a torrent of tears, and, for a considerable time, she neither ate nor slept; but virtue had a great share in the bitterness of her heart, and during this affair, she acted as a truly christian woman. If she did not neglect the means suggested by human prudence, those which religion furnishes had the preference, and it was by these that she commenced. She prayed with the utmost fervor, and induced every pious person whom she knew, to do the same. She saw Father de Bérulle several times: she opened her heart to him and made known to him the excess of her affliction. Her tears, aided by solid reasons, but reasons always in perfect submission to the will of God, had an effect upon this great servant of God. He assured her, that she could, without wounding her conscience, do every thing in her power to effect the return of Vincent to her house; he even gave her hopes that he would unite with her in inducing him to do so.

Upon these principles, the countess wrote several letters to our saint, which are so many proofs of her piety and of the uprightness of her intentions. "I know," said she, and these words show the extent of her virtue, "I know that a life like mine, which only serves to offend God, does not deserve to be taken care of: but my soul should at least be assisted at death."

Motives so pressing, entreaties so earnest, would appear sufficient to prevail with Vincent of Paul; but he was not one of those men, who are imposed upon by the appearance of good. The first thing he did, after having received the letter of Madame de Gondi, was to raise his mind to God, and make a sacrifice to him of all the feelings in which human respect might have a share. He weighed a second time the reasons for and against in the balance of the sanctuary; and as after a new examination, he saw no reason to change his ideas, he wrote an answer to the lady, in which he omitted nothing that could induce her to submit to the orders of God and to enter into all the views of his infinite wisdom.

This answer grieved the pious countess, but did not dishearten her: she did not discontinue making every effort ima-

ginable to induce him to alter his mind. A quantity of letters went every day from Paris and the neighboring places to Châtillon. A great number are found from doctors, religious, persons of distinguished birth, from Mr. de Gondi, from the cardinal de Retz, bishop of Paris, his brother; without speaking of those of the principal officers of the household, who had known Vincent too well not to regret him. Father de Bérulle also wrote as he had promised the countess. But he did it in a manner conformable to the exalted wisdom and eminent virtue by which he was distinguished. He contented himself with making known to his friend the excessive desire which Mr. de Gondi had of his return, and the terrible blow which his absence had inflicted upon the countess. He thought however he could not do better, than to constitute him judge in his own cause, and to leave to his prudence the care of examining whether the will of God was sufficiently known to him. These new efforts were not more successful than those hitherto employed. The countess knew not what to do, when she thought of a negotiation which proved effectual. We shall speak of it in the course of this history; it is now time to detail a portion of the good which Vincent effected at Châtillon. This recital, although abridged, will show beyond doubt, that it was a special Providence which led him to Bresse, and that his presence was more necessary there than any where else.

The idea which had been given him of that place, could not be more correct. God forbid that we should exaggerate evil, for the purpose of honoring him whom God employed to arrest its course. On the contrary, we will diminish it, and give here but a very moderate extract of the procès-verbal made at Chatillon and signed by the principal inhabitants of the place. It is from them we learn the pitiable state in which that city was, when Vincent arrived. Every one gave scandal in his way. Many families, and particularly the most considerable ones, had been infected with the principles of Geneva. Those who retained their faith, dishonored it by the corruption of their morals. Six aged Ecclesiastics, who were all the clergy of Châtillon, instead of opposing the torrent of disorder, rendered it more rapid and contagious

by their bad example. This was all the resource of two thousand inhabitants; for there was, at that time, no religious community at Chatillon.

As soon as Vincent arrived there, he applied himself carefully to know the state of his flock. What he discovered both by his own observation and the information of pious persons, terrified him. He concluded at once that he could effect nothing solid, unless he was powerfully seconded. With that view he went to Lyons to seek aid. A doctor of the name of Louis Girard, whose merit and virtue were known in Bresse, was willing to become his associate. They both labored from the beginning of the month of August 1617 with indefatigable zeal, and that happy concert, without which the best laborers can never succeed. Vincent followed at Clâtillon the method which had succeeded so well at Clichy. He commenced by putting in order the house of the person with whom he lived, as he would have done his own. They rose at five o'clock. They afterwards made half an hour's meditation. The office and the holy Mass were said at an appointed time. The pious priests themselves put their chambers in order. There were neither girls nor women to wait in the house. Vincent had made this regulation with his host.

The new pastor visited regularly twice a day a portion of his flock. He gave the rest of his time to study and the confessional. He had the divine office celebrated with all possible decency. He banished dancing and the scandalous excesses which dishonored the feasts; and in order to augment a little the revenue of his church, he founded two masses in perpetuity; one for the day of St. Vincent, the other for that of St. Paul.

As the bad example of one ecclesiastic often does more harm than the edifying conduct of many others does good, Vincent neglected nothing to reform the priests of his parish. He prevailed on them to abandon entirely all public amusements. After having retrenched abuses, he endeavored to establish the reign of order in the very place where confusion had so long existed. He engaged all his priests to live in community, and to give more time to piety

and labor, than they formerly gave to idleness and folly. He managed all minds and hearts with such power, address, and skill, that every thing succeeded. The whole town was surprised and edified at so prompt and perfect a revolution; and the wise concluded that a man to whom the reform of a clergy like his had cost so little, would be fortunate enough to gain his whole parish to God.

The event verified the conjecture. After the arrangement of which we have spoken, Vincent began to labor for the instruction of the people and the conversion of sinners. He spoke in the pulpit with more strength and unction than ever, and in his discourses which were full of fire, he developed all that the scripture furnishes best calculated to give rise to a fear of the judgment of God, and regret for having offended him.

In order to sustain great truths by great examples, he assiduously visited the sick, consoled the poor, made himself poor in order to relieve them. He communicated to others, and even to children, the sentiments of zeal and affection which he had, from his most tender youth, for the suffering members of Jesus Christ. His exterior inspired virtue; he was dressed very simply, wearing the cassock, and the hair short. He was perfectly ignorant of all those profane customs which disorderly ecclesiastics called fashions, and the holy canons worldly manners. This is the testimony which the baron de Chastenai gives of him; a certain proof that seculars consider as important, many things which ecclesiastics too easily look upon as trifles.

God blessed so many and so wise preparations with a success that exceeded the most flattering hopes. Priests, people, inveterate sinners, all entered upon the good way, and four months had not elapsed, when Châtillon was no longer the same.

Amongst the conversions which God operated by the ministry of his servant, the most remarkable was that of two young ladies of condition, who, filled with the spirit of the world, had hitherto made a bad use of the attractions of their sex and of the advantages of fortune. At the first discourse which

Vincent delivered in public, they conceived an exalted idea of his talents. His vehement style made an impression upon them, and they prepared to pay him a visit. The saint, who perceived the trouble of conscience, to which he had given rise, spoke to them with so much force and unction, that they took their determination upon the spot; and without troubling themselves about what the world would say of it, they formed the resolution to bid an eternal adieu to its amusements, and to consecrate themselves without reserve to Jesus Christ, and to the poor who are his members. They undertook and executed it with a facility at which they were themselves surprised: and their zeal rendered them worthy to be at the head of that pious association which the saint established some time after in favor of the sick, and which under the name of the Confraternity of Charity, served afterwards for a model to a great number of others, as we shall see.

The removal of Vincent, whom those generous ladies lost sooner than they expected, did not diminish their primitive fervor. It was strikingly visible in a famine which occurred, and a short time afterwards, in another dreadful scourge, the pestilence, which laid waste Châtillon. The trouble and alarm of the public took away nothing of the presence of mind, so necessary, yet so rare, on such occasions. Without wishing to tempt God, they put all their confidence in him. They had cabins erected near the city, and there they lodged. It was from thence, as from a salutary and abundant source, that flowed nourishment for the poor, and remedies for those whom the contagion had attacked. Bresse was moved at the spectacle exhibited by two persons, who were so penitent after having been so worldly; and the people could hardly refrain from tears, when they saw them passing whole days and nights in the cottages, where death was seen in its most terrific form.

The conversion of these two ladies contributed greatly to the credit of the holy priest, throughout the country; but there was none better calculated to honor his labors, than that of the count de Rougemont. That nobleman, who had passed all his life at court, had adopted its maxims, and particularly that

mania of always being ready to draw his sword, either to revenge those of his friends who asked his aid, or to terminate his personal disputes. He had made himself the terror of the country, and every one feared him as a demon. The reputation of Vincent of Paul being spread throughout all Bresse, the count desired to be acquainted with a man, of whom he had heard such extraordinary things. He paid him several visits, and in conversation he laid himself open without difficulty on the subject of excesses of which no one was ignorant. The words of the servant of God were for him that two edged sword of which the scripture speaks. That man, who had caused so many tears to flow, soon began himself to shed tears. He was terrified at the state of his conscience; and to calm it as soon as possible, he yielded himself up entirely to the guidance of the holy priest. His return to God, was as perfect as it was rapid, and Vincent experienced more difficulty in moderating his fervor, than directors generally have in exciting those who are deprived of it.

He began by selling his property of Rougemont; and of more than thirty thousand crowns which he received for it, there was not a portion that was not employed, either in founding pious monasteries, or in relieving those who were in indigence. The chateau of Chandès, his usual residence, was a common resort for the religious, and a kind of hospital for the poor. Sick or well, they were there treated with all possible attention. There was none of them on his lands, whom he did not go to visit and serve personally; and when he was obliged to be absent, which was very seldom, he caused them to be visited and waited upon by his domestics.

He had such an exalted idea of voluntary poverty, that, although he possessed his property, less as a master than as an economist whose duty it was to make it profitable for the poor, he desired to renounce it entirely. Vincent had occasion for all his authority to prevent him from taking that step, and the count stood in need of all his submission, to yield to his advice. With a view of replacing without interruption one good work by another, he obtained from the archbishop of Lyons, the permission to keep the blessed Sacrament

in his chapel, that he might more frequently animate his faith and his charity. There it was, that prostrate at the feet of his judge, he wept with tears of blood the loss of so many souls, which the love of false glory had caused him to precipitate into the abyss. He gave regularly three hours a day, and sometimes four, to meditation. He made it always on his knees, with his head uncovered, without any support, and most frequently on the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, his God and his Saviour.

Vincent, from whom he concealed nothing, having one day gone to pay him a visit, the count declared to him that in all his exercises of piety, he had no other object than a perfect detachment from creatures. On that occasion, he told him, that travelling one day, and occupying himself with God along the road, he began to examine with new attention, whether since the time he had endeavored to renounce worldly affections, there was not still some one which was not banished from his heart. He ran over, in his mind, his affairs, his connections, and that infinite crowd of amusements, which captivate a man without his scarcely perceiving it. During this examination, which occupied him a long time, he cast his eyes upon his sword. He asked himself why he still carried it. His agitated mind supplied him with reasons for and against it. He first said to himself that he would be lost, should he be attacked without having it; but he also thought that the facility of using it, might be fatal to him. At this idea he got off his horse, and broke the dangerous instrument of his former disorders against a stone. He acknowledged that this sacrifice had cost him a great deal; but he also admitted that having made it, he experienced a peace, a liberty, and disengagement so entire, that he hoped from henceforth to belong to God alone.

That confidence, which was founded upon the merits of our Saviour alone, was not confounded. The count de Rougemont walked to the last moment in the way in which his director had placed him. He was tried, towards the end of his life, by a long and painful illness, but his love was stronger than his pains. At last, when about to enter into eternity, he earnestly begged of the Fathers Capuchins, and received with

respect, the humble habit of St. Francis. That habit of penance appeared to him more glorious than all the dignities with which he had been invested. No one doubted that his death was precious in the sight of the Lord; every one loaded him with benedictions, but not without calling to mind Vincent of Paul, to whom the count was, after God, indebted for his conversion, and without whom he might well have died, as he had so long lived, in disorder and impenitence.

Vincent did not confine his zeal to those of the faith, he extended it also to those whom the new heresies had separated from the Church. One of the first whose conversion he undertook, was Mr. Beynier, with whom he had lodged when he arrived at Châtillon. This young man, owing to his errors and to a considerable fortune, pursued a course of life far from edifying. Vincent showed him the danger to which his heresy and his disorders exposed his eternal salvation. After having separated him from a crowd of libertines who besieged him, he gave him a taste for the truths of faith; and notwithstanding the rage of the ministers with whom Châtillon was filled, he had the consolation to bring back to the fold the sheep that had been doubly a wanderer. Yet he used every effort to give the honor of his conversion to others, and for that reason he did not wish to receive his abjuration.

If the return of Mr. Beynier was honorable to the zeal and capacity of Vincent of Paul, the regularity of his conduct was no less so. He gave himself up entirely and with surprising facility, to the practice of the greatest virtues of christianity. He resolved to lead a life of celibacy. He gave up in one week two or three farms, which no one demanded, but whose acquisition appeared to him doubtful. He was as liberal towards God, as he had been prodigal in superfluous expenses. In fine, he carried his liberality so far, that in consequence of giving, above all in the time of the pestilence which raged some years afterwards at Châtillon, he became poor himself. We shall remark, more than once, in the life of Vincent of Paul, that charity towards his neighbor was his favorite virtue and that he had a singular talent of communicating it to all those who had any intercourse with him.

The conversion of Mr. Beynier was followed by many others; but none made more noise than that of the Messrs. Garron, because there was none to which greater obstacles were opposed. Their father, an old warrior, was one of the most zealous partizans of the reformed religion. The change of Mr. Beynier, his brother-in-law, had greatly incensed him; but when he saw that his own children were about to be undeceived, he could no longer govern himself. Tears, prayers, threats, friends, ministers, all was employed, but in vain; for no power can prevail against the designs of God. All his children were converted. The death of the father which soon followed gave new strength to their faith; and they exhibited, some of them in religion, others in the world, great examples of virtue.

The important service which Vincent of Paul had rendered to the Garrons, was never effaced from their minds. Nearly forty years afterwards, one of them having to consult him upon a delicate affair, recalled it to his recollection in the most grateful terms. It was from the same letter that Vincent learned that the charitable association of the servants of the poor, still continued in existence at Châtillon. This good work requires of us that we should say a few words respecting its origin.

Vincent being one day about to go into the pulpit, one of the two ladies, of whom we have spoken before, requested him to recommend to the charity of his parishioners, a family, which was extremely poor, and the greater part of whose members had fallen sick, half a league from the town. He did so with an unction which was natural to him, and which appeared to redouble, whenever the interest of those who were in poverty, was concerned. God gave such efficacy to his words, that after the sermon a great number of those who had heard it, went to visit them. Some carried bread, others wine, others different eatables. Vincent went himself after Vespers, and was much surprised to find a multitude of persons on the road, returning. He praised their zeal, but he did not think it sufficiently prudent. "This," said he, "is great charity, but it is not well regulated. These sick persons will have too many provisions at one time. Those which will not

be immediately consumed, will be spoiled, and these poor people will soon be in the same necessity as before."

This first reflection induced the saint, who possessed a spirit of arrangement and system, to examine by what means, not only that afflicted family which was actually the object of his zeal, but all those who might thereafter be in similar circumstances, could be relieved according to rules of order. He communicated his observations to some ladies of his parish, who possessed both property and piety. Each one was desirous of having a share in so good a work, and the saint, profiting by these happy dispositions, drew up the plan of a rule which he desired them to try for some time, before putting the seal to it by the approbation of the ecclesiastical superiors. His maxim was that a wiseman should adapt his ideas to experience, and that there are an infinite number of things which, although beautiful in speculation, are neither possible nor advantageous in practice. So that, although he never undertook any thing, without consulting God and asking the advice of the most experienced persons, he took great care to resolve upon nothing without a sufficient trial. He acted thus with regard to the rule of the new confraternity; he did not solicit its approval until three months' experience had convinced him that there was nothing to risk. It would be difficult, says an eye-witness, to give a relation of all the good which that holy association has produced, the conversions of which it has been the source, the aid which the poor have received from it, above all in the time of the contagion of which we have spoken. The inhabitants of Bourg and of the neighboring places, who were informed of its advantages, soon established similar ones. The man of God, who was encouraged by this first success, multiplied it during his whole life, as much as he could. In a few years he established it at Villepreux, Joigni, at Montmirel, and in more than thirty parishes dependent upon the house of Gondi. From thence it passed not only to the capital, but into Lorraine, Savoy, Italy, and many other places which we cannot enumerate. But we may at least conclude that there are, in a great part of Europe, thousands of poor who to this day owe to the charity

and prudent industry of Vincent of Paul the temporal and spiritual aid which they receive from the piety of their benefactors.

The saint was entirely occupied with the care of his flock, and already reaping abundant fruit from his labors, when Madame de Gondi, who had never for a moment given up the thought of persuading him, made a last effort, which proved successful. She sent to him a gentleman of her house, who was distinguished for talents and prudence, and was moreover his particular friend. It was Mr. Du Fresne, the gentleman who had caused Vincent to enter into the service of queen Margaret, and whom Vincent in his turn had procured as secretary to Mr. de Gondi. He was the bearer of a great number of letters, and those of Mr. de Bérulle were not the least conspicuous amongst them. Although completely master of himself, Vincent could not entirely conceal the emotion which this last effort produced upon him. Grief and sorrow were painted in his countenance. To calm his first emotion, and place his mind in a situation that might be fit to obey the voice of God, he went to the church, and there threw himself at the feet of that great master, whose councils are ever salutary. It was his inviolable custom never to take any determination, without consulting him.

Mr. Du Fresne, who was afraid of failing, entered into a conference with his friend. If he did not convince him entirely, he was at least so happy as to persuade him to leave the decision to some wise, virtuous, and disinterested friends. These, after a long and serious discussion, decided in favor of the house of Gondi, and thus Vincent found himself obliged to return to Châtillon only to bid adieu to his beloved parishioners. He assured them, in an exhortation delivered on the occasion, that when Providence led him to Bresse, he did not believe he would ever leave them; but since it had ordained otherwise, it was his and their duty to submit to its decision. He did not fail to assure them, that they would always be present to him before God. He conjured them also, not to forget him in their prayers, and he repeated several times that he had great need of them.

If a pastor be permitted to enjoy the pleasure of being tenderly beloved by his flock, Vincent must have then experienced great consolation. He had no sooner announced his departure, than tears flowed from the eyes of all present. There were many among them, who were so unable to restrain their affliction, that it broke out in cries that filled the whole church. Each one believed he had lost all, in losing the man of God. The heretics alone could not conceal their joy. However, although their aversion was already the eulogy of the saint, they could not refuse to render justice to his virtue and talents; and many inhabitants of Châtillon have long remembered these words addressed by some of them to the Catholics: "In losing your curate, you lose the best stone in your religion."

Every thing we have related, is taken from the two reports drawn up at Châtillon, about four years after the death of the servant of God. A portion of the second concludes with these beautiful words: "In fine the undersigned say that it would be impossible to point out every thing done in so short a time by Vincent, and they themselves would find difficulty in believing it, had they not seen and heard it. They have so great an esteem for him, that he is spoken of as a saint. They believe that what he did at Châtillon, would be sufficient for his canonization, and they have no doubt, if he acted elsewhere as he did here, that he would be one day canonized."

Whilst a part of Bresse was abandoned to tears, and thrown in a state of desolation by the departure of a man who was looked upon as its apostle, Vincent proceeded to Paris. His return caused as much pleasure to his friends, as his sudden departure had been a source of sorrow to the inhabitants of Châtillon. The pious Madame de Gondi, who, during his absence, shed so many bitter tears, received him as an angel, whom God had sent back to her, to conduct her in the paths of perfection. But that she might not be exposed to future alarm, she made him promise that he would assist her at the moment of her death.

The saint, who had only a general inspection of the Messrs de Gondi, possessed every possible facility to follow

his inclination to labor for the salvation of the people of the country. At the beginning of the following year, he gave missions at Villepreux and in the surrounding country. A learned doctor of the house of Navarre, two clerical counselors in parliament, and many other virtuous priests joined him. After having relieved the wants of the soul, they endeavored to supply those of the body by means of the confraternity of charity. Villepreux was the second parish in the kingdom, in which it was established.

The countess of Joigny saw with incredible pleasure the fruits of sanctification, so visibly attached to the labors of her holy director. But it must be acknowledged that that lady who was possessed of an extraordinary fortitude, notwithstanding her almost continual infirmities, had a great share in all his undertaking. Her presence, the examples of virtue which she gave every where, her charities, the gracious air with which she prodigally bestowed them, affected the people, and rendered their hearts better disposed to receive the seed of the word of God.

The mission of Villepreux was followed by several others, which produced the greatest good in the dioceses of Sens, Beauvais, and Soissons. The one he made at Montmirel, on account of its circumstances, should not be forgotten. Madame de Gondi, who often resided in that town, knowing that there were three Calvinists in the neighborhood, solicited the saint to undertake their conversion. He consented willingly, proved the catholic doctrine in so solid a manner and answered the difficulties with so much wisdom, that at the end of the first week, two of those gentlemen yielded to the truth.

It was not so with the third: he was a man, who, with very moderate talents, had much conceit of himself; he was always ready to dogmatise, and although his life was bad enough, he made of the bad conduct of some catholics an argument in favor of his cause. It was by such means that he undertook one day to prove that the catholic church could not be led by the spirit of God, "because," said he, "on one hand the catholics of the country were abandoned to vicious

and ignorant curates, and left without instruction concerning their duties, and on the other, the cities filled with priests and monks living in idleness.

This objection on the part of the heretic, affected the servant of God very much. It showed him more forcibly than ever the spiritual wants of the people, and the necessity of aiding them. Yet, not to leave unanswered a difficulty, in which there really was nothing solid, the saint, after having replied that, among the religious who resided in the cities, some were useful to the public by their preaching, and others by their learned works, added, that those who failed in their duty, were, it is true, in the church, because it includes the chaff and the good grain; but that they did not constitute the church; on the contrary, they resisted the Holy Spirit who governs her. So just an answer produced no effect. The neglect of the country people had made so great an impression upon the heretic, that he continued to look upon it as an invincible argument.

To remove such objections, as far as was in his power, Vincent redoubled his efforts. He returned the following year to Montmirel, and overran all the neighborhood with a number of zealous priests and religious. These last missions were attended with the same success as those of Folleville and Villepreux. They soon became a common topic of conversation. The same man, whom our saint could not win the preceeding year, wished to be an eye witness of what was going on. He undertook the examination of the exercises with all the attention of a prejudiced man. He saw, he admired in the servants of God, a charity which accommodated itself to the weakness of the most illiterate. He was witness to the conversion of a great number of sinners, who hastened to expiate their former disorders by penance and by tears. Struck by what he saw, he went to seek the saint, and said to him: "Now I see that the Catholic church is directed by the Spirit of God, since care is taken of the instruction and salvation of the poor country people. I am ready to enter it, whenever you will be pleased to receive me." Notwithstanding, a difficulty concerning the respect paid to holy images,

a difficulty which the holy priest caused a child to answer, still detained him; and Vincent, who was an enemy to any thing like precipitation, judged it proper to put him off. But at last this man made his abjuration. His return was as sincere as it had been difficult; and he persevered to his death in the faith of the catholic church.

Although the wants of the poor country people were the great object of the zeal and charity of Vincent, he did not stop there. Scarcely had he returned from his missions, when, to relieve himself from the fatigue attendant on that arduous ministry, he visited, like a tender and active father, the hospitals and the prisons. As his inclination always leaned to the side where the most evils were to be remedied, particularly when those who were afflicted had any connexion with the house of Gondi, he was desirous to know how the criminals destined to the galleys were treated. The dungeons of the state-prisons were opened to him: he expected to find in them a great deal of misery, but he found much more than he had any idea of. He saw, says his first historian, wretches shut up in obscure caverns, eaten by vermin, attenuated and entirely neglected both for soul and body.

Such hard treatment, which was so much in opposition to the dictates of christianity, affected him deeply. Without losing a moment, and under the impressions he had received from that pitiful sight, he addressed himself to the general of the gallies. He represented to him that these poor people belonged to him, and that, whilst they were waiting to be sent to Marseilles, charity made it a duty for him to see that they should not be deprived of succor or consolation. He laid open all his views, and with the approbation of Mr. de Gondi, he hired and furnished with all possible diligence, a house in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. He there gathered together all the galley slaves who were scattered through the different prisons of the city. To sustain this good work, which had no other funds than those of Providence, he obtained contributions from those of his friends, who had the means of furnishing the expense. The bishop of Paris seconded his efforts, and by his mandate of the first of June

1618, he directed the curates and preachers to exhort the faithful to favor so holy and so important an enterprise. After being provided for their corporal wants, they were in a state to be relieved from their spiritual ones. These were great; but assiduity and patience soon overcame every obstacle. The saint often visited his dear galley slaves; he spoke to them of God with an eloquence full of sweetness; he made them sensible, that, however involuntary their sufferings were, they could receive them in such a manner as to make them meritorious. He added that such a disposition would diminish their bitterness, and that after all, there are no real sufferings but those which are to punish crime and impenitence for a whole eternity.

This kind of discourse made a great impression upon men who were not accustomed to it, and who were rendered more attentive by the kind treatment they received. Marks of sincere sorrow were manifested. General confessions completed in the course of time what exhortations had begun, and Vincent had the consolation to see men, who, in many cases, had forgotten God for a long series of years, approach the holy mysteries with dread tempered by love and gratitude.

This change, which announced in a sensible manner the operation of the Most High, did great honor to our saint, both in Paris and at the court. Mr. de Gondi, as much surprised as edified at the beautiful order which a single man had established among people who had no idea of order before, formed the design of introducing it into all the galleys of France. He spoke of it to the king; and after having given him a correct idea of the capacity and zeal of Vincent of Paul, he assured him, that if the court would authorize it, he would certainly effect elsewhere the same good, which he had already effected in Paris. Louis XIII, who was possessed of a sincere piety, willingly consented to the proposition; and by a brief of the crown of the eighth of February, he appointed our saint, almoner general of all the galleys of the kingdom.

This new employment, which showed the esteem in which Louis the Just held Vincent, was shortly followed by another, which evinced the judgment which St. Francis of Sales

had formed of him. This great bishop, whose name alone recalls the idea of one of the most worthy pontiffs that Jesus Christ ever gave to his church, became acquainted with Vincent, when, after his return from Bresse, the saint entered again into the house of Gondi. A tender charity soon formed a close union between these two great souls. The gift of spiritual discernment which they possessed in an eminent degree, dictated the opinion which they should form of each other. Vincent acknowledged that the mildness, the modesty, the majesty, and whole exterior of Francis of Sales, gave him an idea of the Son of God conversing with men. Francis of Sales published in his turn, that Vincent was one of the most holy priests he had ever known, and that he saw no one in Paris who had more piety, more prudence, more of those rare qualities which are necessary to lead souls to exalted and solid piety.

These motives determined him to select him the first superior of the religious of the Visitation, whom the blessed Jeanne Frances Frémiot de Chantal had a little before established in the Rue St. Antoine. This choice made by a prelate, who held it for a maxim that even an individual should choose a director amongst ten thousand, and that a man having charge of a religious house should unite to a great virtue an extensive knowledge and great experience; this choice, I say, will serve with all wise persons, as a proof of the merit of Vincent of Paul. But that which serves to exalt his piety infinitely more is, that he saw in this honorable employment only the terrible account by which it was to be followed. In order to render this account less severe, for the greatest saints have trembled at it, he joined to the practice of the sacerdotal virtues the most severe and painful mortifications. Disciplines even to blood, a frightful hair shirt, sharp pointed chains, short sleep and always upon straw, an extraordinary sobriety in eating and drinking, a number of similar austerities, had for a long time entered into his plan of life, and he never deviated from it. This year he performed the spiritual exercises at Soissons with the greatest fervor. It was there that weighing himself in the balance of the sanctuary, he discovered in himself a fault, which might have in time, pre-

sented some obstacle to the sanctification of the people, whose salvation and interests God so evidently confided to him.

His air, naturally grave, had in it something austere, particularly with regard to persons of rank, and his disposition which inclined him to solitude, rendered an intercourse with him less easy. The poor, with whom he was in his element, did not perceive it; but the great, who look for urbanity even in virtue, sometimes noticed it; and the countess of Joigni who, fearing very much to lose him, feared also that he might be somewhat dissatisfied in her house, manifested her trouble to him from time to time. The holy man, during the retreat which he made at Soissons, examined himself seriously upon this article, and became better acquainted with its importance than he had hitherto been. He had recourse to prayer and to such exact watchfulness, that persons said of him what he himself had said of St. Francis of Sales, that it was difficult to find a man, whose virtue displayed itself in more amiable traits of countenance, or better calculated to gain every heart to God.

The galley slaves experienced it the following year. Vincent performed a journey to Marseilles for their advantage. His object was to examine, whether he could do for them at the extremity of the kingdom, what he had already done in the capital. The execution of this project was by no means easy. It was necessary, at least in part, to reform a multitude of wretches who, most frequently, detest nothing of their crime, but the punishment by which it is followed; whom excessive chastisement renders furious, and who indemnify themselves by their blasphemies against God, for the ill-treatment they receive from men.

The saint did not wish to make himself known when he arrived at Marseilles. By that means he avoided the honors attached to the dignity of almoner general, and he took the surest way of becoming well acquainted with the true state of things. He had his reasons for preserving his incognito, and Providence had its own. In going from one side to the other through the galleys to see how things were managed, he perceived a galley-slave who was in despair, because his absence

reduced his wife and children to extreme misery. Vincent, terrified at the danger which threatened a man overwhelmed by the weight of his disgrace, and perhaps more unfortunate than guilty, examined for some moments whether it would be possible for him to mitigate the severity of his lot. His imagination, fruitful as it was in expedients, could furnish him none that pleased him. Then, seized upon and carried away as by an impulse of the most ardent charity, he conjured the officer who had charge of that district, to agree that he should take the place of the criminal. God who, when he wishes to display the virtue of his saints, well knows the means of effecting it, permitted the offer to be accepted. It was only some weeks afterwards, that Vincent was recognised; nor would he have been known so soon, if the countess of Joigni, astonished at receiving no news of him, had not caused a search to be made, which the saint could not escape. This event was yet remembered at Marseilles, when the priests of the mission were established there, that is to say, more than twenty years afterwards; and it was admitted that, since the time of St. Paulinus, who sold himself to ransom the son of a widow, an example of more surprising and heroic charity had not been witnessed.

Vincent gave all the remainder of the time he spent in that city, to the relief of the galley slaves. It is impossible to give an idea of their state, without recurring to the idea of hell itself. The saint went from rank to rank, like a good father who feels all that is suffered by his children whom he tenderly loves. He listened patiently to their complaints; he kissed their chains, and washed them with his tears; he joined, as much as was in his power, alms and alleviation to his exhortations. He also spoke to the officers and overseers, and inspired them with sentiments of greater humanity. The spirit of peace began to reign, murmurs were hushed, the ordinary almoners could speak of God without being interrupted, and it became evident at last, that the galley slaves were susceptible of virtue.

He would have done still more, had not the continual moving about of the galleys, which, in time of trouble, have no

fixed station, obliged him to return to Paris. He travelled with great rapidity; but an affair of charity arrested his course at Mâcon. A crowd of beggars having besieged him, he learned from his own customary interrogations, and from the report of the inhabitants, that they were ignorant of the very first principles of faith. He also discovered that they passed their lives in libertinism, and amidst vices and a filth calculated to inspire horror. He undertook to put a stop to this disorder. Nothing, it is true, was more difficult; it was necessary to establish exact discipline amongst men rendered insolent by their number, and to take such measures as to remove all danger of sedition. Those who heard the project spoken of, looked upon it, without hesitation, as a beautiful chimera. Those who were less wise, treated it as folly; the more moderate thought there was much rashness in it: but it was not long before they were undeceived.

The holy man, with the consent of the magistrates and of the bishop, made a regulation by which all these poor people were divided into several classes. He afterwards established two associations, one of men for the males, another of women for the females. In these confraternities, every one had his employment. Some had care of the sick, others of those who were well. These were charged with the poor of the town, others with the strangers, whom they lodged for one night and dismissed the following morning with a little money. The execution of this prudent and natural plan, for which Vincent gave the first alms, changed in a few days the whole face of the town. The citizens were in security, and the beggars assembled in an orderly manner, at regular hours, in places where clothing and food were distributed to them, and where they also received lessons of piety and salvation.

The execution of this project, which at first appeared impossible, inspired the inhabitants of Mâcon with a great idea of the prudence of Vincent of Paul, who, to escape from the honors which were paid him by the magistrates, the nobility, and all the best people of the country, was obliged to take his departure without their knowledge. The priests of the Oratory alone, with whom he stayed nearly three weeks, were ac-

acquainted with it: and it was on this occasion, that entering his chamber at an early hour, they perceived that he slept on straw. He concealed this mortification as well as he could; but great as was the pain he took to do so, as well as to hide his other virtues, it is known that he practised it to the day of his death, that is to say, for fifty years. The plan of the confraternity of which we have just spoken, appeared so beautiful to the assembly of the clergy held at Poissy, in 1670, that by a deliberation of the nineteenth of November, 1675, they exhorted all the bishops of the kingdom to establish it in their dioceses.

After having completed the business which called him to Paris, he formed the design of giving a general mission upon the gallies. It was more necessary than ever, at a time when France was all in a flame, and when heresy was ever ready to revolt by sea and land. He then set out for Bordeaux, where there were ten gallies. The cardinal de Sourdis, archbishop of that metropolis, a prelate whose piety was as enlightened as it was fervent, whose zeal for the re-establishment of discipline, whose charity for the poor, caused him to be looked upon as another St. Charles Borromeo, could not fail to support with all his authority, a man who was vested with that of the prince, and whose name had already reached the extremities of the kingdom. The saint selected, from the different monasteries of the city, twenty of the best evangelical laborers he could find, and distributed them two and two in each galley. As for himself, he was every where, and it may be said that if the unction attached to his words penetrated the hardest hearts, his example animated those who labored with him, and supported them in the fatigues of the ministry. The consolations of heaven were not wanting to him; and amongst others he had that of gaining a Mahometan to God. This proselyte, who was called Louis at his baptism, followed his benefactor every where. He honored him as his father, and a long time after his death, he told all who would listen to him, that, next to God, he owed his conversion to Vincent.

After this mission, Vincent, who found himself in the neighborhood of his family, determined, by the advice of some friends, to pay a visit to his relations. His design was to

strengthen them in virtue, teach them to cherish their humble condition, and declare to them once for all, that being able to live as they had hitherto done by the labor of their hands, they should expect nothing from him. He stopped at the house of the curate of Pouy, his friend and relation; he edified him as well as the rest of his family by his piety, his temperance, his mortification; he renewed his baptismal promises in the parish church; he consecrated himself anew to the Lord in this place, where he had received the first impressions of the apostolical spirit. On the day of his departure, he went, barefooted, in procession, from the church of Pouy to the chapel of Notre Dame de Buglose, a distance of a league and a half. His brothers, sisters, and other relations, rich and poor, and almost all the inhabitants of the place, assisted at that pious ceremony. The saint celebrated a solemn mass in that sanctuary, which was then more venerated than ever, because they had replaced in it, a short time before, in 1620, a statue of the Blessed Virgin, which a shepherd had discovered in a marsh, where some pious persons had secretly buried it more than fifty years before, to save it from the fury of the calvinists. After this ceremony, the saint gave a frugal repast to all his relations. He then blessed them, and bid them farewell forever. He conjured them never to abandon the simplicity in which God had placed them. Humiliation for himself and for his, was one of the favors of which he was most ambitious upon earth.

Although Vincent had visited his family by the advice of his friends, he reproached himself with it for a long time, as contrary to the spirit of self-denial so often recommended in the scripture to the ministers of the gospel. The trouble and affliction, which the sight of the poor and suffering situation, in which he had left a great portion of his relations, caused him for three months, appeared to his tender piety a species of punishment from God; and it was only by fervent prayers that he succeeded in calming this new tempest. He had no less affection for those whom nature had so closely united to him, and it was to afford them proofs of a perfect and religious attachment, that some time afterwards he engaged vir-

tuous ecclesiastics to make a mission at Pouy and the neighboring parishes. He soon commenced another himself in the diocese of Chartres. The great good which it produced gave birth at last to a company of priests destined to labor for the sanctification of the people of the country. We will explain its origin; the course of years will develop its progress.

Madame de Gondi, struck by the happy success attending the first missions of Vincent, had, since the year 1617, formed the design of giving to some community a fund of 16000 livres, to have missions made, every five years, throughout all her territories. Vincent, to whom she entrusted the employment of this sum, addressed himself to the Jesuits, the Fathers of the Oratory, and to the superiors of different houses. All excused themselves from accepting it; some, because they were too few in number; others, because they had already sufficient obligations, without contracting new ones. Providence, in permitting this general refusal, had its own views, and it was the countess of Joigni, who unfolded them. She reflected that, as almost every year a number of doctors and virtuous ecclesiastics united with her director, to labor in the country, a kind of perpetual community might be formed, if a house could be procured where they might assemble and live in common. The count, her husband, spoke of it to the archbishop of Paris, who was his brother. That prelate justly thought, that such an establishment could not be but very advantageous to his diocese. He approved of it without hesitation; and not being able, at the time, to do better, he established Vincent of Paul, with the title of principal, in an old college, founded towards the middle of the thirteenth century, under the name *des Bons-Enfants*. This college, which St. Louis honored with his protection, had at this time a chapel which was extremely poor, some apartments in a bad state, and in the neighborhood a certain number of houses which were falling to ruins. Such was the cradle which God chose for a congregation, which after having spread itself throughout a great part of the kingdom, became multiplied in Italy and Poland, where, through the mercy of God, it is equally dear to the clergy and the people. It was on the first

day of March 1624, that Vincent was appointed principal of this college, and the 6th of the same month, Antoine Portail, one of his first companions, took possession of it in his name. I had forgotten to mention that the holy priest had received a licentiate in canon law some time before.

The following year, the general of the galleys and his consort consummated this great affair. They say in substance in the deed of foundation, that having considered that, whilst the inhabitants of the cities are well instructed, and the country people remain as it were abandoned, they thought it a duty to bestow the sum of forty thousand livres, to procure for them, all the aid they stand in need of, gratuitously; that, in placing this sum in the hands of Vincent of Paul, in order that he may choose in the course of a year ecclesiastics capable of laboring usefully under his direction, the said persons understand that he shall always reside in their house, to continue to render, both to themselves and their family, the spiritual assistance which he has afforded them for several years: that those who wish to associate in this good work, will consider it a main point, that they cannot either preach, or administer any sacrament in large towns, except in cases of evident necessity: that moreover they shall be obliged to render spiritual assistance to the poor galley slaves to make them profit by their corporal sufferings. This is an abridgment of the contract. It would be difficult to find one, which exhibits in a stronger light the sincere piety and perfect disinterestedness of these illustrious founders. They forgot themselves, and seemed to be entirely occupied with the care of the poor. They gave enough to require much. Yet, for fear of withdrawing the laborers from their principal object, they did not load them with obligations, nor even with prayers to be applied personally to themselves. The equity of Vincent of Paul and the gratitude of his children, have abundantly supplied for it; the precious remnants of the house of Gondi now lost in those of Lesdiguires and Villeroi, will always have the first share in all the good done by the missionaries of the kingdom, as well as by those who labor in foreign lands.

Some time after this contract was made, Mr. de Gondi set out for Provence, where new movements on the part of the rebels, required his presence. Our saint followed him sooner than he expected, as the bearer of the most afflicting news he could receive. The countess of Joigni was still in the flower of her age, but was already ripe for heaven. Two months had scarcely elapsed, since the foundation of the missions, when she fell sick. The malady appeared dangerous from the beginning. The habitual infirmities of this pious lady, the weakness of her constitution, the efforts she had made to establish the kingdom of God throughout her possessions, led to the conclusion, that she would scarcely be able to resist the violence of the disease. She felt it herself, at first, but she felt it as a true christian. Spiritually stronger and more fervent in proportion as her body was enfeebled, she profited by every moment that remained to her. Supported, animated by the holy director, whom she had secured for herself particularly for these last moments, she waited with a kind of impatience peculiar to the elect, for the blow which was to immolate her. It was not long delayed : and whilst her family, overwhelmed with grief, wept aloud the loss they were about to experience, the virtuous dying lady closed her eyes to the grandeur of the world, which had never dazzled her, to open them to that immortal glory, which had always been the centre and the object of all her desires.

Thus died, on the twenty-third of June 1725, in her forty-second year, the illustrious and virtuous Frances Margaret de Silly, countess of Joigni, marchioness des Isles d'Or, &c. The tears which the good, and the poor in particular, shed upon her tomb, are sufficient for her eulogy. Great by the dignity of her birth, and by alliances which united her with the most noble houses of Europe, she was still greater by her piety towards God, by her compassion for the unfortunate, by her watchfulness in her family, by her zeal for the salvation of all those to whom she could make herself useful ; in fine, by the most perfect assemblage of all those rare virtues, which the great ones of the world know little, and practice still less. Her name will be sufficiently conspicuous in history and will

subsist as long as those of Luxembourg, Laval, Montmorency, de la Rocheguyon, and of so many heroes from whom she was descended. But we must admit, at the same time, that she owed the most beautiful traits of her glory to the saint whose life we are writing. Formed by him to the most sublime perfection, she will be remembered as long as the saint himself. Her virtues, like those of Vincent of Paul, will be traced in indelible characters; and the most distant regions will never announce the merit and labors of that good man, without praising her, who so generously seconded his most glorious undertakings.

Vincent having paid her the last tribute of respect, set out immediately to communicate this afflicting intelligence to the general, who was still in Provence. He used all the precautions necessary on such an occasion. He disposed the count of Joigni by degrees, to adore all the dispensations of Providence. He spoke to him at first of all the favors with which heaven had loaded him and his family. He added that the more God had signalised his mercy towards him, the more love and gratitude he owed for it: that man never evinces that gratitude better, than when he conforms his will to that of the Lord; and that a perfect submission is the sacrifice the most agreeable in his eyes. At last he apprised him of his loss. After having left to nature its first emotions, which virtue cannot disavow, he made use, to mitigate his grief, of all the motives which faith suggests, and which are never stronger, than when employed by christian simplicity.

It is evident, and it has been often remarked before, that no one possessed in a greater degree than Vincent, the gift of consoling the afflicted. Madame de Gondi had experienced it a hundred times; and in the violent interior pains with which it pleased God to exercise her, she never found more solid consolation than in the words of the holy priest. Hence, arose, in part, that singular esteem which she had for him. She gave him sensible marks of it in her will, less by the legacy which she left him, than by conjuring him, in the most moving manner, never to abandon either the general of the gallies or her children after her death.

Such was not, however, the will of God. Vincent who had gone to the house of the general, only because he could not avoid it, and who, on the other hand, had the greatest horror for the world, intreated Mr. de Gondi, to permit him to retire. This virtuous nobleman was greatly afflicted at the proposal; but as he was accustomed to examine things before God, he easily conceived that the rising company of Vincent of Paul stood in need of his presence, and that his remaining in the house of Gondi would, at least, retard the work of God, if it did not ruin it altogether. The general knew well, that, however pure the air breathed in the best regulated secular houses, it is always very different from that found in solitude; hence, a short time after the death of his wife, he himself renounced all human greatness, and entered into the congregation of the Oratory. It was there, that during upwards of thirty-five years that he yet lived, he distinguished himself as much by his piety, mortification, and invincible patience, as he had been illustrious in the world by his courage and zeal in the service of the king.

Vincent of Paul retired, in 1625, to the college des Bons Enfants. He was followed thither by Antoine Portail, a priest of the diocese of Arles. The latter had been for nearly fifteen years his declared disciple, and he made, under the direction of the saint, so great progress in humility, that, although a man of much merit, having made very good studies in the Sorbonne, and being an excellent writer, he sought only to be unknown, or rather despised.

As it was impossible that these two priests should long support the fatigue of the missions, and satisfy the devotion of the people, they begged of a third to join them for a time. The whole three went from village to village, catechising, exhorting, confessing, and performing all the other exercises of their institute. They did so with a simplicity, humility, and disinterestedness that gained the hearts of all. Every day the harvest became more abundant, and new laborers were soon wanted. Providence, which had given birth to the congregation, took charge of its increase. Six other priests offered themselves to share his labors. They were almost all doctors

in theology, or disciples of the school of Sorbonne: but although the holy founder esteemed their talents, he esteemed much more their humility, and the zeal with which they burned for the salvation of souls.

Louis XIII, to whom the count of Joigni gave an account of this happy commencement, authorized the new association by letters patent. The public voice sustained it against a cabal which sought to stifle it at its birth. The wisest magistrates supported it. The parliament of Paris placed the seal of its authority on it, in 1613; and Urban VIII, delighted that under his pontificate the most neglected sheep of the flock of Jesus Christ, should find faithful and disinterested pastors, erected it into a congregation the following year. His bull, which is dated January twelfth 1625, places Vincent at the head of all those who are to labor with him, and gives him power to draw up rules for the good order of his institute. Those who embraced it were to bear the name of *Priests of the Mission*; and this name is so attributed to them by the holy see, that it is by it, that the sovereign pontiff distinguishes them, even from the other ministers of the word, who labor for the salvation of the people. Thus the missionaries and the children of Vincent of Paul, will be, in the course of this work, synonymous terms.

Whilst God was thus taking in hand the interests of his servant, that holy priest did not forget those of God. He divided his little troop in different bodies: and after having inspired them with the holy fervor with which he was himself animated, he sent them to the places, where he thought their presence was most necessary. His spirit was every where with them; but he did not rest satisfied with raising his hands upon the mountain like Joshua, he also combatted in the plain, and there is every reason to believe that he was always found in the most difficult encounters. The province of Lyons, the wants of which he knew, fell to his lot. If he did great good there, his priests were equally successful in all the places in which they labored. We may form an idea of it by a letter which he received at the end of the year 1627, from a very celebrated abbé. "I have just arrived," says he, "from

a long journey which I made into four provinces. In truth, I do not believe that there is any thing in the church of God more edifying than the sweet odor which your holy company spreads every where. We must pray to God to give additional solidity to a design so advantageous for the good of souls, to which very few of those who are dedicated to the service of God apply as they ought."

This letter consoled Vincent of Paul very much. But, as in extolling the labors of his priests, it reminded him, both of the wants of the country people, and of the absence of zeal or talents in those who were charged with their salvation, he took a new resolution to arrest the course of this double torrent, which carried away the flock, only because it had first carried away the shepherds. As to the people, as nothing better could be done than to procure for them solid and moving instructions, he continued to send them fervent missionaries, whose labors were recompensed by God with a success which, as we shall see hereafter, astonished a great part of Europe. With regard to the pastors, he judged wisely, that he would have very soon to see the country people a prey to their former abuses, or to adopt the plan of forming priests better calculated to maintain the reign of virtue, than were the greater part of those who were obliged to lead them.

Vincent had not yet formed so extensive a project; but he could scarcely form one more necessary. Happily the state of affairs rendered it a little more practicable, than it had been for a long time. La Rochelle, which had been, as it were, the centre of the forces of heresy, had just surrendered to Louis XIII. The bishops began to breathe, and those who had most zeal for the reform of the clergy, urged it with more energy than ever.

Adrien Bourdoise, a man full of ardor for the interests of the Lord, was an intimate friend of Vincent of Paul, and as they both were acquainted with the most virtuous prelates of the church of France, and were both animated by the same spirit, they could not but be inspired with the same sentiments. One of those with whom they conferred most frequently concerning the wants of the clergy, was Mr. Augustin Potier de

LIFE OF ST. VINCENT OF PAUL.

Gèvres, bishop of Beauvais, whose pastoral vigilance and love of discipline have acquired for him a very great and very just reputation. This prudent prelate, upon the plan proposed to him by our saint, resolved to make of his palace a kind of seminary, to receive into it those who were preparing for holy orders, and to make them discuss, in a regular course of conferences, the principal points which it was necessary for them to know and practice. Vincent approved this project very much, and, at the solicitation of Mr. de Gèvres, he made a distribution of the matters which should engage the attention of the ordinands. He opened the exercises; two doctors of Sorbonne shared the labor with him, but he was more occupied than any one. He explained the Decalogue; and he did it with so much accuracy, strength and unction, that a great number of those who assisted at the exercises, and even of those who gave them with him, desired to make a general confession to him. This was not the only benediction which God gave to his journey; for, having found some protestants who wished to enter upon a contest with him, he showed them so well the weakness, even the ridiculousness, of their pretended reformation, that three of them were reunited to the catholic church.

About two years after this essay of a retreat given to the ordinands, Jean François de Gondi, first archbishop of Paris, learned from Mr. de Gèvres the great fruit which these exercises began to produce in his diocese. That prelate, afflicted at seeing the young ecclesiastics of the capital in want of a means of instruction, which had been procured for those of the provinces, obliged, by his mandate of the twenty-first of February 1661, all those who were to be admitted to orders to make a retreat of ten days, as a preparation, in the college des Bons Enfants. Vincent, in the absence of his priests who were almost always in the country, called to his aid those who being filled with the spirit of God, were the best suited to communicate it to others. Thus, Mr. Hallier, whose virtue and science placed him afterwards in the see of Cavaillon, gave the instructions for the first ordination in this college; and he succeeded perfectly, because, as Mr. Bourdoise re-

marked, he said nothing that he did not practice himself. The archbishop of Paris was not the only one to acknowledge the utility of this new species of exercises. Seculars, even women, wondered at the change which took place in the ecclesiastics of their parishes. They were found to be more grave, more modest, more attentive in performing the ceremonies; and persons distinguished the clergymen of Paris, who were admitted to the retreats of the ordinands, from those of other diocesses who had not had the happiness to participate in them. This induced some pious ladies to propose to the holy priest to receive, without distinction of country, all those who aspired to holy orders. The lady of the president de Herse took upon herself the expense for five years. The marchioness of Maignelai, sister of the archbishop, a lady of tender charity, and who had a very particular esteem for Vincent, favored him also. Ann of Austria, who, having heard one of the discourses delivered by the new bishop of Boulogne, François de Perrochel, felt how important it was for the clergy to continue to form young ecclesiastics in this manner, gave intimation of a design to make a royal foundation; but as princes themselves cannot always do what they wish, the project was abandoned; and soon afterwards, the burthen of the expense which, as there were at that time six ordinations a year, amounted to the nourishment, during two months every year, of eighty ecclesiastics, fell upon the society alone.

The saint easily perceived that he would have great difficulty in supporting it, and his friends begged him to pay attention to it. But that great heart, which preferred the glory and the utility of the church to the temporal interest of his company, far from changing his first design, added, some years after, new burthens to the first; and when in 1646, a decree was issued at the archbishopric, that those who were to receive the minor orders should make the retreat with those who were preparing for holy orders, he received them all with a tender and respectful affection.

He was naturally pathetic; but he seemed to surpass himself, when it was necessary to animate his companions to con-

secrete themselves entirely to the good of the aspirants to orders. He had such lively feelings with regard to the dignity of the priesthood and the contempt into which it had fallen, that it is scarcely possible to express them. His grief and his tears redoubled, particularly when he saw the church in danger of sustaining new losses; because, like the holy doctors, he laid all to the account of bad priests. These sentiments, so worthy of a minister of the altar, shone forth during the troubles by which France was agitated towards the middle of the last century, and perhaps still more at the time when the formidable Charles Gustavus appeared to announce to Casimir the loss of his kingdom and to the Roman Church the seduction of a considerable portion of her flock. It was then that the holy priest, whose humility always induced him to believe that he contributed more than any one else to the evils which religion suffered, redoubled his efforts to prepare for the Lord, ministers capable of appeasing his wrath, and to induce his companions to labor as much as possible for that end.

He represented to them that the church was ruined in numberless places, and that it was so only in consequence of the disorders of the priests; that it was to them we should attribute the deplorable decrease which afflicted it in Africa and a considerable portion of Europe; that they knew that France was not free from the contagion; and that Poland, already much infected by error, was, by the invasion of the king of Sweden, in danger of being entirely lost to religion; that, in fine, it was to be feared, lest God, wearied by our excesses, would remove his church to strange nations.

From these principles, the holy man drew two consequences, which equally prove his humility and his zeal. The first was, that those of his congregation, and himself more than any other, should humble themselves before God at the sight of their misery: the second, that, very far from considering as a burthen the expense and trouble necessary to instruct the ordinands, they should look upon it as a special favor; "a favor," said he, "which God has granted to us in preference to so many others, so much more worthy of it."

The means which he desired to be used for the success of

the retreats of the candidates for orders, corresponded to his virtue and to the esteem which he had for the priesthood. Persuaded that the success of such enterprises is in the hands of God, he earnestly recommended to his whole house prayer, fervent communions, mortifications, and every thing that could serve to draw down the dew of heaven, both upon those who labored and those for whom they labored. It was also his desire that, on whatever side the ordinands should turn, they should find examples calculated to instruct and edify them. In fine, he gave strict orders that nothing reasonable should be omitted to please them.

With regard to the instructions, which are an essential part of these exercises, some of which turned upon the virtues necessary for a minister who would save himself and save his brethren, others upon the principal points of moral theology, he required detail, and in that detail great simplicity. He could not bear to hear those pompous sermons, which seem only calculated to please the ear. Every discourse which only served to gain applause for its author was, in his opinion, not only useless but pernicious. He attributed the great success of the instructions of the bishop of Sarlat, to the even and natural style which he used; and he remarked to his priests that others "who thought to do wonders by preaching fashionably, spoiled every thing."

Although exercises so short, so rapid, and with which our saint was satisfied only because it was not in his power to continue them longer, must naturally have had a limited success, God was pleased to give a blessing to them, which we must consider as the fruit of the prayers and sighs of his servant. The bishops of Angoulême, Reims, Noyon, Chartres, Saintes &c. to whom he had sent priests to preside at the retreat of their candidates for orders, wrote to him to testify their gratitude. All their letters said as much as that the towns and country blessed God for so great a good; that the people struck by the modesty of the ecclesiastics, shed tears of joy: that charmed with the order, decency and piety with which the new priests performed the divine offices, they imagined they saw angels from heaven rather than men.

The fruit produced by similar retreats at Rome was not less consoling. Urban VIII had established the priests of the mission, in 1642, at Monte Citorio. They began, the following year, to receive into their house those who came of their own accord to prepare for ordination. The hand of God was with them in the capital of the christian world, as it had been elsewhere: and it was there discovered that three or four priests animated by the spirit of God, were sufficient to sanctify a great number of others. Alexander VII was so well aware of it, that, under his pontificate, assiduity in attending those pious exercises became a necessary condition for the holy orders. From that time, it has pleased God to sustain them. Innocent XI, to whose virtues even heresy had rendered justice, went still further than his predecessors. - He extended, in part, to all the priests, and even to the curates of Rome, what had at first been established for the aspirants to holy orders alone. The capital served, as is almost always the case, as a model to the provinces. Cardinal Barbarigo, bishop of Bergamo, was one of the first who employed the missionaries to perform the exercises in his diocese. He sometimes took a part in those which were performed at Monte-Citorio; and afterwards a number of cardinals, prelates, generals of orders, were seen there as much affected, as the ordinands themselves, at the beautiful discourses of cardinal Albici and cardinal de Sainte Croix. The plan of inviting persons distinguished for their erudition or their employments to the exercises for ordination, originated with Vincent of Paul. He knew that, although the word of God is of itself full of power, it nevertheless appears to have more energy in the mouth of those whom a great name has made superior to other men. It is upon this principle, that Bossuet, Fénelon, and many other great bishops, before and after them, have more than once given the instructions at St. Lazarus to the candidates for orders, with a noble and energetic simplicity.

If heaven did not always bless immediately the labors of the holy priest, it often indemnified him with interest for the delay. Jean Armand le Bouthillier de Rancé, who has become more illustrious for his virtues, than he had been famous by

his disorders, is a striking proof of it. "It was," says a writer celebrated for his misfortunes, "it was under the direction of the illustrious Vincent of Paul, so well known for his piety, his zeal, and for so many virtues which he displayed, that the young de Rancé made his retreat. The holy man forgot nothing to inspire him with the dispositions required in a man who was destined to the first employments of the hierarchy. It was necessary to begin by reforming his exterior. Interior dispositions were the next point. The spirit of retreat, separation from the world, mortification, humility, prayer, were the virtues that Vincent principally endeavored to inspire him with. He afterwards spoke to him of the multitude of benefices he possessed against the rules of the church. This morality alarmed the young abbot but the seed skilfully sown, did not fail to put forth, and produce fruit in its time." Now of how many others may we not suppose what Dom Gervais here says of one man?

The application with which St. Vincent labored to reform the clergy, did not cause him to forget the wants of the poor country people. He had established, as we have elsewhere seen, the confraternities of charity, wherever he could. But as neither he nor his priests, overwhelmed by the weight of innumerable other labors, could visit them, except very seldom, it was to be feared that the first ardor of an association so useful, might cool by degrees, and that the poor would fall into the same state, from which he had had so much trouble to withdraw them. The holy priest ardently desired that Providence would raise up some charitable person, who would be calculated to visit the country, sustain the persons of whom the confraternities were composed, train them to the service of the sick, keep up amongst them the spirit of mercy which had been the principle of their charitable association.

It was not long, before God quieted the uneasiness of his servant. He had scarcely entered the college des Bons Enfants, when the illustrious Madame Le Gras took, without knowing it, a house which was not far from his. This incomparable woman, who, in the opinion of five great bishops, was granted to the age, to convince it that neither delicacy of

constitution, nor the bonds of society, are invincible obstacles to the highest perfection, was born at Paris, on the twelfth of August 1591, of Louis de Marillac, lord of Ferrieres, and of Marguerite Le Camus. The beauty of her mind induced her father to make her study philosophy; and whilst still young, she was considered capable of the most elevated sciences. But grace had taught her lessons, which the greatest masters cannot teach; and if the weakness of her constitution, did not permit her to enter, as she desired to do, into a very rigorous order (the Capuchins), her marriage with Antoine Le Gras, secretary to queen Mary de Medicis, did not prevent her from deserving in a few years the glorious title of mother of the poor. She rendered them all the services of the most humble, ardent, and industrious charity. She visited them, without paying attention to the quality of their diseases; she herself presented them the nourishment of which they stood in need; she made their beds with much more affection than a hired servant would have done; she consoled them with expressions full of tenderness, and she buried them after their death.

Jean Pierre Camus, bishop of Belley, the great friend of St. Francis of Sales, and consequently of Vincent of Paul, was the director of Madame Le Gras. This prelate was almost as much occupied in moderating her fervor and zeal as in calming the interior pains which, for several years, had troubled the peace of her soul. But as the obligation of residing in his diocese, put it out of his power to give her the aid which she needed, he was desirous of choosing a director for her, who would be capable of helping and strengthening her. Vincent of Paul was the one upon whom he cast his eyes. God soon made it manifest, that it was himself who conducted the whole affair, and that he wished to make use of those two great hearts, to give to his church a new company of virgins entirely consecrated to works of charity.

Madame Le Gras, who had just lost her husband, divided her time between the exercise of prayer and that of charity. She gave to the relief of the indigent, all the time which she did not spend in those fundamental duties, which regard God more immediately than our neighbor. But her zeal received

a new impulse on seeing a director, always ready to sacrifice himself when he could be useful to his brethren. After his example she conceived the design of consecrating her life to the service of the poor, and cooperating with all her power in the great designs which the holy priest was every day forming in favor of the poor. Vincent, who was on his guard against precipitate steps, wished to try her, and the trial lasted nearly four years. He directed her to spend a part of her time, in consulting God in retreat, and imbibing in the frequent reception of the body and blood of our Lord the spirit of light and strength which was necessary for her.

This delay, which was for her a sort of novitiate, only served to confirm her in her first design. The activity with which she embraced, during this interval, all the occasions of practising charity that presented themselves, at last proved to her director that it was time to set her at work, and that, having all the virtues which St. Paul requires in true widows, charity could present no duty, however repulsive, of which this truly strong woman was not capable. Upon this principle, he proposed to her, in 1629, to undertake to visit a portion of the places where charitable associations had been formed, in order to honor the journeys which charity had caused the Son of God to perform, and participate in his labors, his fatigues and the contradictions which he experienced in them.

The pious widow obeyed the voice of the saint, as that of God himself. To remove even the shadow of dissipation, which insensibly mingles with the most holy journeys, the wise director took such proper measures, that the travels of Madame Le Gras served to make her more recollected and more fervent. She was always accompanied by some pious ladies. The most inconvenient conveyance was preferred to any other. They were to live very poorly, in order to take a greater share in the misery of the poor. Their exercises of piety were performed as regularly on the road as in the house. The day of their departure they went to communion, in order to receive by a closer union with Jesus Christ a more abundant communication of his charity, and a surer pledge of

his protection. In the course of the journey they often raised their eyes towards the holy mountains to invoke the necessary aid. With such precautions, persons may travel a long time without experiencing any diminution of fervor. Thus, far from ever perceiving any in Madame Le Gras, she was always found to return to Paris more virtuous than she had left it.

She applied herself during several years consecutively to these exercises of charity. She visited with great fruit the dioceses of Soissons, Paris, Beauvais, Meaux, Senlis, Chartres and Châlons in Champagne. When she arrived in a village, she called together the ladies who composed the association of charity. She showed them the value of their employment, by giving them the instructions which they required to fulfil it well. When they were too few to bear the burthen, she increased the number. She taught them by her example to wait upon the sick who were in the most desperate situation: she supplied by her alms their funds, which were often exhausted: and to enable them to continue their good works more easily, she distributed, at her own expense, clothes and things necessary for the relief of the poor and sick. After the example of her director, who made use of the health of the body as a means of procuring that of the soul, the zealous and holy widow labored for the one only to attain the other. Thus, she did not confine herself to allaying the sufferings of the dying or the hunger of the indigent; she planted the kingdom of God in the hearts of the young persons of her own sex. With the consent of the curates, without which she was forbidden to undertake any thing, she catechised, in some convenient house, the young girls who were not sufficiently instructed. If there was a school mistress, she taught her, almost without its being perceived, how to perform her duty well; if there was none, she endeavored to find one who had the necessary dispositions; and in order to train her, she gave the first lessons in her presence.

Enterprises so holy, and which would have done honor to a Paula and a Fabiola, were often censured; but they were more frequently and more universally applauded. It was to

caution her against the slightest impressions of pride which might arise from such marked esteem, that Vincent prescribed to her as a rule, amidst the honors paid her, to raise her heart to Jesus Christ loaded with insults. But, to moderate at the same time the fire of her activity, which carried her much beyond the strength of her constitution, he frequently exhorted her, to take care of herself for the love of our Lord and of the poor who are his members. He even told her in positive terms, that one of the artifices which the devil uses with most success to deceive those who belong to God, is to prompt them to undertake more than they are able to perform, in order that they may soon be rendered unable to do that of which they were capable.

Whilst Madame Le Gras was practising with a sort of excess, all the duties of a tender and laborious charity, Vincent was not inactive. He was already at the head of all the good works which regarded the advantage of his neighbor; and he was this year the cause of the success of one, which ran a great risk of falling to the ground. The Marchioness of Maignelai, who willingly seized every occasion of promoting the honor of God, had founded in 1618 an asylum, to arrest the disorders of the persons of her own sex. In a short time, a considerable number presented themselves, who appeared delighted to find a harbor after their shipwreck. But it was soon found, that this institution wanted an essential part, and that there was in it no one capable of conducting it. The holy priest, to whom they had recourse after twelve years of useless efforts, followed his ordinary course. He consulted God; and upon his answer, of which he gave an account to the archbishop of Paris, he destined four religious of the Visitation to fill the first places in the monastery of the Magdelaine.

This plan, like most of those that relate to the glory of the Lord, experienced the greatest opposition. But at last the difficulties vanished in the hands of a man, whose great sense furnished him with infinite resources. The daughters of St. Francis of Sales, who were at first much alarmed at the difficulties of this new employment, acquitted themselves of it

with their usual zeal and capacity. They gained every heart by the mildness and attention which characterise their institute. Charity made them absolute mistresses; and they regulated that numerous community so well, that it afterwards produced those of Rouen and Bordeaux. It is true that the saint was of great service to them, either by the wise counsels which he gave them personally, or by his letters, or the good confessors whom he procured for them. But the zeal and labor of those virtuous ladies is not the less estimable. A child loses nothing of his glory, by sharing it with his father.

The holy joy, with which the happy success of so many good works must have filled a heart so sensible to the interests of God as was that of Vincent of Paul, was troubled by the death of the cardinal de Bérulle, who, that very year, 1629, expired at the holy altar in the arms of his well beloved. Vincent lost in him a friend and a father; but what afflicted him most was, that the church lost in him a model of the priesthood. To indemnify it, at least in part, for that loss, he opened the doors of his house to ecclesiastics who might wish either to reconcile themselves to God after having wandered from him, or to resume in solitude the courage they stood in need of to walk with new ardor in the arduous paths of the ministry. As these retreats never made more noise than after Vincent took possession of the house of St. Lazarus, it will be proper before entering into further detail, to point out the manner in which this establishment was made. This we shall develop in the following book.

Book Second.

THOSE who have paid most attention to the history of Paris agree, that the house of St. Lazarus is very ancient. It must have been very considerable in early times, since the kings of France, on ascending the throne, made it their abode for some weeks, in order to receive the oath of allegiance from all orders of citizens. In the course of years, St. Lazarus became the asylum of those who were attacked with the leprosy, a terrible disease, and so common until the twelfth century, that in christendom there were found more than nineteen thousand hospitals for those who were infected with it.

The hospital of St. Lazarus had in its constitution something very singular. They received there only citizens born in lawful wedlock and within the four principal gates of Paris. This rule admitted of no exception but in favor of the bakers, who being more subject to this terrible malady on account of the fire, were admitted from any part of the kingdom. No one, however, was received without having previously made a vow of obedience to the first director of the house, who enjoyed as his own, all the possessions moveable and real, of every sick person after his death.

In spite of the revolutions which, after having raised communities to a certain point, insensibly degrade them afterwards, the house of St. Lazarus was still in the time of our saint one of the most considerable in Paris. Eight regular canons occupied it by commission. Adrien Le Bon, their superior, had with them one of those contests, which, although sometimes necessary, are not the less disagreeable. After many conferences and some regulations which resulted in nothing, the prior thought only of leaving a place, where, with the

best intentions in the world, he only suffered and caused others to suffer. But as he was a pious man, and as he happened at that very time to hear of the good that Vincent was doing, he thought, that, if he could induce him to take his house, he would render an important service to the church. He spoke on the matter to Mr. de Lestocq, curate of St. Lawrence, his neighbor and intimate friend.

That pious and learned doctor, who having been occasionally associated with our saint in the country missions, had been an eye-witness to the services of every kind, which Vincent rendered to all, took great care to confirm the prior in his resolution. He told him repeatedly, that it came from the Holy Ghost. He spoke to him at length of Vincent of Paul and his priests, and said every thing advantageous of them.

Such favorable information would have been sufficient to determine a man not so well disposed as Mr. Le Bon. The two friends set out immediately. The prior proposed his plan without delay. He told Vincent of Paul in a few words, that he had received a very flattering account of his congregation and its charitable employments; that he would be happy to contribute to its prosperity; and that he was ready to yield his house and all its dependencies to concur in such an excellent work.

A proposition so advantageous surprised or rather alarmed the servant of God; and although he could generally master his feelings, yet, his trouble manifested itself in a tremor, which the prior of St. Lazarus perceived. He asked of him the cause of it. Vincent replied with much modesty, that his proposition was so far above his merits and those of his priests, that he scrupled thinking of it. He continued to express himself in a manner so positive, and combatted so powerfully the most pressing arguments, that Mr. Le Bon lost at first all hopes of making him change his opinion. Yet the mildness of the holy priest, the piety, the charm of his conversation affected the prior so much, that the desire of executing his design, became stronger in proportion to the obstacles he met with. This induced him, when he was about to retire, to tell the saint that the offer which he was making

well merited his attention, and that he gave him six months to think of it.

It was probably in this interval, that our saint gave two striking proofs of his humility. The archbishop of Paris, who, in many things rested upon him, having called him to a great assembly held in his palace, reprimanded him rather harshly, on the subject of a mission which he thought Vincent had neglected. The latter, after the example of the Royal Prophet, said not a word to justify himself; and although he was then more than fifty years old, he went on his knees, like a young novice before the master, and he begged his pardon for a fault of which he was not guilty. This conduct which at first created surprise, did not fail to give great edification; but there was much more cause for admiration, when it was known that he had performed, and well performed the mission which the prelate had accused him of having neglected. André Duval, that famous doctor who was always so intimate with our saint, could not help exclaiming before the whole assembly, that it was difficult to find one in whom there was more virtue than Vincent.

The second occasion in which the holy priest showed his humility, was furnished him by one of his nephews. The servant of God was in his room, when the porter announced to him that there was a countryman below, who called himself his nephew, and desired to speak with him. Nature suffered a little at this moment. The saints themselves have to struggle as long as they are men, and they are men to the last breath. Vincent at first begged one of his companions to go and receive this relation; but he overcame himself on the spot; he even went into the street where his nephew had remained; he embraced him tenderly, took him by the hand, and having introduced him into the house, he called all his priests and told them that he was the best man of his family. He did still more: he presented this poor relation to all the respectable persons who came to visit him.

So complete a victory over the demon of pride did not appear to him sufficient, and during the first retreat which he made with his company, he accused himself publicly of hav-

ing had so much pride as to wish to introduce his nephew secretly into his room, because he was a countryman and badly dressed. It is the same Mr. de Saint Martin, canon of Acqs, of whom we have already spoken, who preserved this circumstance so glorious to our saint. He then lived at the college des Bons Enfants, and was there at the time when this happened. However, this poor young man, who, on his arrival in Paris, believed his fortune to be made, was much deceived in his expectations. The holy priest had made a compact with his own heart; and he always kept it on its guard against the illusions of flesh and blood. He sent his nephew home on foot, as he had come, giving him only ten crowns for his journey; he even begged them as an alms from the marchioness of Maignelai; and this is the only time he asked aid for any of his family.

If these virtuous actions came to the knowledge of the prior of St. Lazarus, they could not but inspire him with a new desire to complete the affair which he had undertaken. However this may be, he did not fail, at the end of the time he had appointed, to visit the college des Bons Enfants and redouble his efforts. Mr. de Lestocq, who again accompanied him, spoke at least as forcibly as he did. The servant of God remained firm and immovable. He represented to them that an establishment so considerable could not fail to produce great sensation; that he had with him only a few priests; that his community was but beginning, and that he feared nothing more than to be spoken of.

The dinner hour, which arrived, suspended the contest. Mr. Le Bon was pleased to dine with the holy priest and his little community. The order preserved at table, the pious reading, the modesty and frugality which he observed, charmed the prior. He conceived for the priests of the new congregation almost as much esteem as for their institutor; and more strengthened than ever in his first design, he begged Mr. de Lestocq to continue his efforts and to allow neither peace nor truce to Vincent, until he at last should force him to consent to a proposition, which seemed so reasonable.

The affair could not be trusted to a man more eager for its

success. The curate of St. Lawrence was a particular friend of Vincent of Paul, and he desired nothing more ardently, than to have him for his neighbor. He paid him more than twenty visits in the space of six months, and made use of all the motives that piety and reason can suggest. Nothing could shake the servant of God. Humility and abjection were his favorite virtues. Any arrangement that might have removed him from the situation in which Providence appeared to have placed him, seemed to him suspicious and filled with danger. At the end of a year, Mr. Le Bon and his friends were no farther advanced than on the first day; and entreaties repeated more than thirty times, far from conquering the repugnance of Vincent, had not even induced him to go and see the house which was offered him. It was because he feared lest his heart might become the dupe of his eyes, and that the situation and advantages of the new establishment might appear to him a sufficient reason for accepting it.

At last the prior of St. Lazarus, tired at his want of success, said one day to the holy priest with some emotion: "you are, sir, a very strange man. There is not a person who wishes you well that is not desirous of your acceptance of the offer made you. In such matters it is not wise to rely entirely upon ourselves. What friend have you in Paris whose counsels you follow most readily? I will have recourse to him; and provided he thinks as you do, I will cease my endeavors." Vincent, who had nothing to answer to so just a proposal, pointed out Mr. Duval. That pious and learned doctor was, since the death of Mr. de Bérulle, the director of our saint, and it was very evident, on this occasion, that he did nothing of importance without having consulted him.

Mr. Le Bon was delighted with this discovery. He was convinced he would not find the difficulties in the Sorbonne which he had encountered at the college des Bons Enfants. In fact, every thing succeeded according to his wish. Mr. Duval himself settled the conditions of the contract. That article, which is commonly so litigious, was not the cause of a moment's delay. The doctor knew the liberality of the holy priest, and perhaps he granted to the prior more than he asked.

The affair seemed concluded, when an unforeseen incident threatened to break it off. Mr. Le Bon, who was a solidly virtuous man, thought that he ought to stipulate that his religious should lodge in the same dormitory with the missionaries, supposing that the latter would experience no inconvenience from it, and that the former, influenced by the good example they would have before their eyes, would by degrees be induced to imitate it.

A superior less experienced than our saint, would not have hesitated with regard to an article which seemed of so little importance, and was presented in so advantageous a light. But Vincent, who saw principles and their consequences at a glance, judged differently. He feared lest the complaisance and regard which we naturally have for our benefactors, would be an obstacle to the spiritual good of his little flock. Hence, without losing time, he begged of Mr. de Lestocq to represent to the prior of St. Lazarus, that it was the rule of the priests of the missions to keep silence from evening prayers until the following day after dinner; that they were then allowed an hour for conversation, after which silence was again to be kept until the evening; that supper was followed by another hour of recreation, after which silence was resumed; that, moreover, this silence was very rigorous, and only broken in a low voice and in cases of necessity; that these practices, which are often considered trifles, were looked upon by him as essential, and that he was persuaded that they could not be neglected without introducing disorder and confusion into communities. Hence our saint concluded that it was to be feared lest the religious of Mr. Le Bon, who had not been accustomed to such rigorous discipline, who probably would not be able to accustom themselves to it, would by degrees teach the missionaries themselves to relax in a point, the negligence of which would bring on that of many others. The prior, who understood better than any other, the justice of these observations, yielded the point.

In consequence of the agreement, which was completed on the seventh of January 1632, Vincent took possession of the house of St. Lazarus. The archbishop of Paris, Jean Fran-

gois de Gondi, did him the honor to install him. As they had the consent of the provost of the merchants, of the magistrates, and of all those who might be interested in the affair, it was not thought that they would have any obstacle to encounter. But it was just, that Vincent, who during fifteen months had almost wearied the patience of Mr. Le Bon, should have his own a little tried.

The king having caused the letters patent for this donation to be expedited, a certain religious community, which had a great influence and powerful friends, opposed itself to their being registered, and pretended that the house of St. Lazarus belonged to it. This incident only served to display the exalted virtue of our holy priest, and above all, his disinterestedness and charity. Whilst the cause was discussed, he remained in prayer in the chapel, and he begged of God, not to make him gain the cause, if he ought to lose; but to preserve in his heart a perfect submission to the orders of Providence.

We must acknowledge, however, that, at the commencement of this opposition, one thing gave him trouble, in case he would lose his cause. The reader would not easily imagine it; for, what afflicts the saints, is not generally a source of affliction to others. Mr. Le Bon had received in his house three or four insane persons, to the great satisfaction of their relatives. Vincent, who considered himself entrusted with the care of all the wretched, begged as a favor, on arriving at St. Lazarus, that they should be confided to him. It would be difficult to express with what charity he caused them to be treated; he even waited upon them himself. The more untractable among them were those to whom he consecrated himself with less reserve. The more nature had to suffer from these filthy, troublesome, and often dangerous men, the better he was satisfied. One day that he was examining before God, what would cause him pain, in case he should have to leave the house, nothing disquieted him but the fear of being unable to render the same services to these poor madmen. The convenience of a lordly house situated at the gates of Paris, the property annexed to it, the facility it would afford his rising congregation, all these advantages appeared

nothing to him in comparison with the pleasure he took in honoring our Lord in his infirm members, whom every one repels, and who do not find any asylum, even in their own houses.

At last God recompensed the disinterestedness and humility of his servant by a favorable sentence. The religious of St. Victor did not esteem him the less, and they acknowledged with the rest of France, that the house of St. Lazarus, in becoming the patrimony of the holy man, had become the patrimony of the poor.

The criminals condemned to the galleys were the first to feel the effect of the charity which this new establishment enabled the saint to exercise more extensively. We have already seen what he did for them both at Paris and Marseilles. We shall now see him do things much more important. But here, as on many other occasions, we must be contented with the first epochs. Otherwise it would be impossible to avoid confusion in a history crowded with events, and in which every week, to say no more, saw an astonishing number of glorious enterprises arise, which could be fully executed only in the course of several years.

The galley slaves, being now transported by the care of Vincent of Paul in the neighborhood of St. Roch, were there as well as their situation allowed. But, as they had only a rented house, and might be dislodged under various pretexts, our saint who was accustomed to prevent inconveniences, thought of the means of procuring for them a hospital which might be theirs for ever. That he might not miss his aim, he applied to the king himself, and obtained from him for those unhappy men an ancient tower between the Seine and the gate of St. Bernard. The care, or rather the charge of the spiritual and temporal administration of this new establishment rested almost entirely upon him alone for many years.

With regard to spiritual matters, he directed those of his priests who lived at the college des Bons Enfants, to visit frequently the galley slaves, to say mass for them every day, to instruct them, hear their confessions, and console them. He

afterwards yielded up this employment to the priests of the parish, with a salary of five hundred livres, which his own priests had never received.

Madame Le Gras, who was always ready to listen to, and put in practice, the language of charity, took upon herself most cheerfully the care of temporal matters. She often went to see them and rendered them every good office. Vincent encouraged, by the example of this pious widow, other respectable ladies, to contribute to this good work; but he helped it along more than any one else, and it was to him principally that the galley slaves owed their maintenance and nourishment, during the first eight or ten years they remained in this new abode. At last, Providence secured for them permanent succors, proportioned in some measure to their wants. A very rich person bequeathed them before dying a yearly income of six hundred livres; and this legacy, which at first cost our saint many contradictions, was finally executed.

His tenderness for the galley slaves was not satisfied with the services of which we have just spoken. He endeavored to relieve them in the very point, in which they had most to suffer. What afflicted him above all, when he was at Marseilles, was the pitiful state of those who fell sick. Always in chains, devoured by vermin, overwhelmed with pains, almost eaten up with corruption and infection, these living corpses already experienced the horrors of the grave. Vincent could not see, without deep emotion, men formed to the image of God, christians redeemed with the blood of Jesus Christ, dying like brutes. But he was obliged to have patience; for the disturbed state of the kingdom did not yet allow him to act.

When things appeared a little more calm, the holy priest addressed himself to cardinal of Richelieu, because in addition to one of his relations being general of the galleys, he shared with the duchess of Aiguillon, his niece, the sentiments of esteem which she always had for the institutor of the mission. Vincent, with those pathetic expressions which could scarcely be resisted, represented to him the horrible condition in which the galley slaves at Marseilles were, when sick, and the necessity of forming an hospital for them. Jean

Baptiste Gauld, bishop of Marseilles, and the chevalier de Simiane, both distinguished by their very rare virtues, united with our saint in soliciting the prime minister. Richelieu, who was fond of projects in which there was any thing grand, obtained the consent of the king; the hospital was built on the same spot where Philip de Gondi had laid the foundation when Vincent lived in his house. Louis XIV afterwards assigned it an annual revenue of twelve thousand livres from the taxes of the province. There are three hundred beds, and it is one of the most beautiful and commodious houses of the kingdom. It was still incomplete, when Mr. de Simiane wrote to our saint that the hand of God manifested itself there, not only by the conversion of bad christians, but in that of several Mahometans; and that the latter moved by the charity shown them, paid homage to a religion which in Jesus Christ makes but one people of all the nations of the universe.

To enable Vincent and the missionaries better to continue the good which they had commenced doing to the galley slaves, the young king confirmed to him in 1644 the charge of almoner general, and he did so in a style which shows the universal esteem in which he was held at court. The duchess of Aiguillon took part in so good a work, and by a capital of fourteen thousand livres she founded missions for the galleys for every five years. Thus it was that a poor priest set in motion the first persons of the state, in order to procure for wretched beings, whom he looked upon as his brethren, all the aids of the most tender charity. His zeal, which knew neither difficulties nor bounds, soon prompted him to form a much more extensive project, by means of which he at last discovered the secret of relieving in every part of France, and even in foreign countries, an infinite number of unfortunate beings, who had neither resources nor consolation. But before entering upon this great event, which forms one of the richest portions of his history, I must speak of the service which he rendered the church by the establishment of the ecclesiastical conferences. To understand well what we have to say on this subject, it will be necessary to go back a little.

Vincent, in his missions, had not confined himself to the

salvation of the people; he had also attended to the sanctification of the pastors, who were not all at that time models of virtue. When he found some in a district, whose hearts God opened to his counsels, he instructed them in the manner of preaching the word of God, catechising the children, hearing confessions, and administering the other sacraments with fruit. These first essays induced the saint to believe, that, if regular conferences could be established, they would perhaps have in France the success which they formerly had in the deserts of Thebais. But as he always distrusted much his own ideas, he was contented with praying, and he waited for the moment which Providence would choose. It arrived sooner perhaps than he expected. A pious man, who had much profited by the exercises given to the ordinands, and wished to preserve the fruit of his retreat, proposed to him to assemble from time to time a number of ecclesiastics, to confer together on the means of sanctifying themselves as well as their brethren.

A proposal so conformable to the ideas of Vincent of Paul could not be but agreeable to him. Yet before undertaking any thing, he again consulted God for about fifteen days, and having been convinced that this new sort of exercises would greatly contribute to the glory of his holy name, he made the proposition to the archbishop of Paris, who considered it his duty to approve it. Armed with the powers of his superior, and soon afterwards with those of the sovereign pontiff, whose consent, through the profound respect which he entertained for the holy see, he was always in the habit of asking, even when it was not necessary, he thought of nothing but of choosing proper subjects to begin the new association. He soon found them. Several good priests, who honored him as their father, some of whom had just given missions in Anjou, or were giving one to a great number of laborers employed in building the church of the Visitation, entered into his views with pleasure; and the first assembly was held shortly afterwards in the house of St. Lazarus. At this meeting, Vincent proposed his plan, the end of which was to honor the Son of God, his eternal priesthood, his love for the

poor, and his zeal for the salvation of the people. This project, in which every thing was holy, was received with great applause. On that very day, the necessity of the ecclesiastical spirit and the means of preserving it were proposed as the subject of the first conference. All spoke with solidity, but with great simplicity. The holy priest had foreseen that this exercise would become useless to them, should they affect to deliver eloquent or studied discourses. It is not that he wished them to speak at random; he required on the contrary a proper preparation. But simplicity was his rule, and he would not suffer any one to deviate from it, except when the matter to be treated required particular preparation. Hence there have been seen at these conferences the greatest geniuses of Europe speaking the simplest language, despising what St. Paul calls the vain persuasion of human wisdom, and always choosing between two expressions that which, being less flattering to human pride, was most calculated to edify, touch the heart and incline it to God.

The saint gave them the example; but as he knew the scripture very well, and had above all a singular talent for selecting the examples and words of the Son of God, which had reference to his subject, he developed his sentiments with so much grace and unction, that the illustrious Bossuet, who heard him at an age naturally disposed to criticism, said forty two years after the death of the saint, that he might take our Lord to witness, that he had found in Vincent of Paul, that rare minister who speaks of God in a manner so full of wisdom and so exalted, that God himself appears to speak by his mouth.* Such doubtless would be the testimony that would have been rendered him by a Godeau, a Perrochel, an Olier, a Pavillon and so many others who went from one end of Paris to the other, to hear him, had they been living when the work of his beatification commenced.

The Tuesday assembly, or the conference of St. Lazarus

* *Aderant plerumque magni nominis episcopi. Pium cœtum animabat Vincentius, quem cùm disserentem avidi audiremus, tunc impleri sentiebamus Apostolicum illud: Si quis loquitur, tanquam sermones Dei. . . . Hæc coram Deo in Christo loquor. Benig. Bossuet, in Epist. ad Clementem XI die 2 Augusti, 1702.*

(for it was known by these two names), soon became so celebrated, that, according to a man who cannot be suspected in this matter,* “there was not in Paris an ecclesiastic of merit that did not try to belong to it.” Every body was speaking with rapture of the regularity and indefatigable zeal of those who composed it. Cardinal de Richelieu, who was informed of it by the public voice, sent for Vincent, and spoke to him of it. The holy man gave him an account of the nature of the subjects discussed, and of the blessings which God began to give to them. That great minister appeared well satisfied. He exhorted the saint to continue his good works. He assured him of his protection, and asked him to come and see him from time to time. Before dismissing him, he wished to know the names of the ecclesiastics who attended this assembly, and which of them he considered best suited for the episcopacy. When the servant of God had retired, the cardinal said to the duchess of Aiguillon his niece: “I had already a great idea of Vincent, but since our last interview, I have a much higher opinion of him.”

What cardinal de Richelieu had begun, Louis XIII completed after the death of his minister. Father Binet, his confessor, asked, in his name, of the holy priest an exact account of the talents of those who assisted at the conferences. Vincent obeyed; but at the same time he did what many others would have found some difficulty in doing. It is sufficiently evident, and he felt it himself, that if the good dispositions of the prince transpired in the slightest degree, some ecclesiastics of the first rank might have ranged themselves under the banners of fervor. Vincent, who was a declared enemy to ambition, took the necessary measures to remove it. He knew how to engage a great king to secrecy, after having engaged to it a great minister. He observed it himself so inviolably that none of those whose names he had mentioned, ever knew the designs which the court had on them; and at the very time that he looked upon them as at the heads of dioceses, he spoke to them of nothing but the happiness of living and dying in obscurity.

* *Mémoire de Lancelot sur Saint-Cyran. t. 1, p. 287.*

We do not intend to relate all the good of which the conference of St. Lazarus was the origin; still we cannot refrain from giving some idea of it. One of the first fruits it produced, was to people the church with a great number of faithful ministers, who, being filled with the spirit by which our saint was animated, spread it through all the provinces. It was also from its bosom that rose, even during the life time of the saint, the pious and illustrious founders of the communities of St. Sulpicius, and of the foreign missions; twenty-three archbishops or bishops, who, for the most part, labored with as much courage as success in restoring to the church her primitive beauty; and a prodigious multitude of grand vicars, officials, archdeacons, curates, canons, directors of seminaries or of religious, all of whom spread every where the good odor of Christ. The holy priest made of them a body of reserve, which he sent to the right and to the left, according as circumstances required. France, surprised and always edified, saw them devoting themselves with invincible ardor to the most arduous functions of the holy ministry. Some joined the children of Vincent of Paul, others undertook important missions in the large cities, where the saint did not wish to send his priests. There was no rank or condition in the capital, that did not feel the impression of their zeal. The regiment of Guards, the *Quinze-Vingts*, the mechanics who were ignorant of the very elements of salvation, the beggars with whom Paris was then inundated, the hospital of la Pitié, that which Vincent had procured for the galley slaves, and above all, the *Hotel-Dieu*, that is to say, the domestics, the sick, and the virgins who devoted themselves to their service; such were the objects that occupied them during more than fifty years.

Although the detail of so much good would certainly be most edifying, the nature of a work like this does not permit me to give it. I shall even suppress the prodigious success, which those truly apostolical men had in a large town, where chicanery and iniquity, under the name of justice, held their court in taverns, and were there feeding upon the tears and the blood of the oppressed client. But as the mission which

they made in the suburb of St. Germain, had something singular in its circumstances, it is proper to speak of it somewhat more at large.

This suburb was then the sink of the whole kingdom. The impious, the libertines, the atheists, all that was most wicked, seemed to have conspired to establish their abode there. Vice, by becoming multiplied, had made that place its strong hold. The guilty, on account of their number, lived with impunity; and impunity augmented daily the number of the guilty.

A virtuous lady, terrified at so many abominations, thought that a mission would stop their course. As all good people spoke to her with admiration of the one that Vincent was then giving, she endeavored to persuade him to give one also in this suburb. The saint resisted for some time: but this lady, who was conducted by a superior light, redoubled her prayers with so much earnestness, that he thought at last that the spirit of God spoke by her mouth. He promised her that he would think of it, and he did it so seriously, that a few days after, he proposed to the ecclesiastics of his conference, to undertake that good work. The just deference which all the members of that holy assembly had for the servant of God, did not prevent them from exclaiming against his proposition. Each one brought forward his reasons: they insisted particularly upon the impossibility of success. The conclusion was, that they ought not to think of it any more.

Vincent however thought of it again. He recommended it earnestly to our Lord. An interior answer strengthened him in his first opinion; and when these gentlemen assembled again, he told them in very strong terms, that he had every reason to believe that God required that service of them; that his grace was powerful enough to overcome every obstacle, and that he was persuaded that the enterprise would succeed in spite of the efforts of devils and men. The words of the holy priest did not, on this occasion, produce as much impression as usual; he even perceived that his firmness had given pain to some of those who had most strongly supported the contrary opinion. His humility was alarmed. He went on

his knees before the whole assembly, and asked pardon of the company for the vivacity with which he had renewed his proposition. He protested that he had done so only because he felt himself interiorly urged to do it, and believed that God demanded of their zeal this new proof of courage and love.

The sight of this worthy priest of Jesus Christ, prostrate at the feet of a great number of ecclesiastics, who all honored him as their father, had more effect upon them than any thing that he could have said. The mission was at once unanimously resolved upon, and those who had been most opposed to it, were now the first to urge it.

Before commencing they begged him to regulate himself every thing they would have to do. They represented to him particularly, that the simple and familiar discourses, which succeeded in the country, would be found ridiculous in a city, like Paris, and that as the enemies they were going to attack, were different from those with whom they had hitherto contended, it would be necessary to employ other arms than those which they had heretofore wielded.

These remarks, in which human prudence had some share, could not please a man who, after the example of the apostle, would have thought it injurious to the power of the cross to rely upon purely natural means. He answered them that he was persuaded that the method which they had found to answer so well in all their other missions, was precisely the one which they ought to follow in the mission they were about to commence; that the spirit of the world which triumphed in the place, the conversion of which they were to undertake, could not be more powerfully assailed than by the spirit of Jesus Christ, which is a spirit of simplicity; that to enter into the sentiments of that divine Saviour, they must seek, like him, not their own glory, but that of his father; and that in speaking the language which the Son of God had employed, they would be at least sure, that it was not they who spoke, but Jesus Christ who spoke by them.

These counsels were received as if coming from an angel. Without another moment's deliberation, they set to work. They were not long before perceiving that grace worked with

them. The simplicity and familiar style of their discourses, which they had thought would be the cause of their failure, was precisely that which multiplied the number of their hearers. Their apostolical manner of preaching moved a great part of their auditory. They were themselves surprised and delighted. They saw every day, and almost at every moment, inveterate sinners, hardened usurers, barefaced and shameless females, libertines who had grown old in the most infamous disorders, in fine, men who had been heretofore without humanity, without honesty, without religion, without faith and without God, coming, with their eyes bathed in tears, and their hearts pierced with sorrow, to throw themselves at their feet, crying aloud for mercy. The finger of God was so evidently with them, that it was impossible not to see its operation. Conversions so astonishing were made, that there was something miraculous in them. Injustice and hatred, the passions the most difficult to conquer, laid down their arms. In a word, the blessing of God was so abundant and so efficacious, that if we were to relate in detail the reconciliations, restitutions, and every species of good produced by this mission, it would form matter enough for a volume; these are the expressions of the contemporaneous author who first wrote the life of our holy priest.

He adds, and nothing is better calculated to confirm his recital, that a citizen of Paris who had followed all the exercises of the mission, and who had been witness of the great good produced by it, was so much moved, that going to those worthy ecclesiastics, he told them that he had a property of seven or eight thousand livres of which he could dispose without injury to any one, and that he came to offer it and himself to serve them for the rest of his life, provided they would engage themselves to continue in other places the exercises they had just finished in the parish of St. Sulpicius. These gentlemen, without accepting his offer, told him very affectionately, that they could not unite in the manner which he proposed, but that their intention was to spend the remainder of their life, in occupations very similar to those by which he had been so much edified, and that God, who knows

how to value the dispositions of the heart, would certainly reward his good will. Such was the result of that famous mission. Bossuet attributed to the prayers of Vincent of Paul the prodigious success of those made by his children in the diocese of Metz, when he was archdeacon there. The reader must judge whether the advantages of the one we have related, were less the effects of the sighs of the holy priest, than of the zeal which he showed to have it undertaken.

Had the ecclesiastical conferences of St. Lazarus effected no other good than that of which we have spoken, they would merit the praises of posterity. But they also promoted the glory of God by the manner in which they spread themselves throughout France and beyond the mountains. Jean Jacques Olier, who alone does so much honor to Vincent of Paul, was the first to establish them in Auvergne and in Vélai, and subsequently amongst the canons of Puy. Those of Noyon established them of their own accord. The ecclesiastics of Pontoise, Angoulême, Angers, Bordeaux, and many others, followed their example. All these assemblies had the same relation to that of St. Lazarus, that colonies have to their metropolis, as appears by the letters of the illustrious Mr. Godeau, bishop of Vence, and of the pious founder of the seminary of St. Sulpicius. I will only add that those established in Normandy by the abbé of Val Richer were attended with the most brilliant success; it is a known fact. I will remark also that he was an intimate friend of our saint, as well as of Mr. Bourdoise, and that a man formed in such a school, must naturally have succeeded, whilst he followed the lessons which he had received in it.*

The good which Vincent had effected among the clergy by this pious and learned assembly, did not satisfy the insatiable ardor of his zeal: he desired to effect something similar in families by the establishment of spiritual retreats. No person had as yet undertaken what he executed in this respect; and it appears that his immense charity will have but few imita-

* Dominique George, born in Lorraine in 1631, died at Val Richer in 1693. His life has been written by Father Buffier, in 1696.

tors. The greatest saints had wept over the corruption which covered the face of christianity; they exhorted the faithful to build a spiritual solitude for themselves in their hearts, there to weigh all their actions in the balance of truth; and to reflect deeply on the eternal years which are advancing at a rapid pace. But it was reserved for Vincent of Paul to afford them a facility to do this, which they had not before enjoyed; and to take away from the middling classes, that is, from the greater number, the pretexts under which they had been accustomed to veil their negligence and insensibility. With this view, he resolved to share his house and possessions with those who were willing to profit by them to become reconciled to God. Like the father of the family, of whom our Saviour speaks in his gospel, he in a manner forced the good and the bad to sit down at his table. All the reward he asked, was that those who were just, should sanctify themselves still more; and that those who were not, should use every effort to become so.

The information of such generous conduct spread by degrees through Paris and into the provinces. In a few months the house of St. Lazarus became more frequented than it had been for a century. Vincent himself compared it to Noah's ark, into which all sorts of animals, both great and small, were well received. In fact, it was a strange enough sight to see in the same refectory, gentlemen of the first respectability and people of the lowest class; enlightened doctors and poor countrymen who had scarcely common sense; great magistrates and simple mechanics; men of the world, and solitaries accustomed to live in the forests; old men who came to lament the past, and young people who had recourse to God to secure themselves against the perils of the future.

To execute his design in a manner useful to those who made the retreat, and transmit the importance of it to his successors from age to age, he endeavored to show to both the price of the grace which God placed in their hands.

He represented to those who made the exercises that the only end of the retreat was to destroy the reign of sin, reform themselves altogether, destroy their bad habits, their faults and

even their imperfections; that they ought to employ their time in begging of God to make them perfect christians, each one according to his state of life and that it was of great consequence for those who had not as yet embraced any state, to consult much with our Lord on that which they were to embrace. He desired above all that particular attention should be paid to those who thought of quitting the world; but then he exacted precautions which amounted almost to scrupulosity. And if on the one hand he wished them to be advised, in general, to prefer well regulated communities to disorderly ones, on the other, he would not allow them to be advised in particular; above all, it was prohibited to propose to them his congregation. The choice of a house, whether secular, as his was, or religious, like most of the others, was, in his opinion, an affair to be decided by God alone, and upon which those who are consulted should dread very much answering rather through views of natural prudence, than according to the maxims of christian simplicity.

In order that the missionaries might omit nothing that could contribute to the success of the retreats, the saint required two things of those to whom he committed the direction of them. The first was, that they should speak in a solid and affecting manner, that they should take care to banish that vain eloquence, which St. Paul reprobated so often, and which God does not bless. The second was, that they should select for the subjects of their discourses, not those calculated to amuse the mind, but the great truths of salvation, our personal obligations, the resources which Jesus Christ has prepared for us in the sacraments, the dispositions required to approach them &c. It is by these means that they are disposed, to make good general confessions, or, if they have already made such as can be relied upon, to supply by an exact review, whatever may have been defective in their late confessions; to prescribe to themselves a rule of life to which they must strictly adhere; and above all, to take firm resolutions and always in detail, not only to avoid sin and the occasions which may lead to it, but also to perform all the good works of which each one is capable in the state of life wherein he is placed by God.

A plan so well formed must have necessarily been very serviceable to those for whom it was made: but as it might happen, after the death of the servant of God, and even during his life, that his priests, worn down by labor, and unable to bear the expense of so many gratuitous retreats, might relax by degrees; to guard them against this sort of temptation, the saint repeated several times in his conferences that the choice which it had pleased God to make of the house of St. Lazarus for the conversion of innumerable sinners, was a great grace; that they should dread nothing so much as to become unworthy of it; that if they should ever deserve to be deprived by God of that employment, it would be to be feared that he would deprive them of all others; that a missionary who would acquit himself of so glorious a function with repugnance, could only be an object of horror before God and man. "Ah!" he exclaimed one day, in finishing a long discourse on this subject, "what a shame, what a subject of affliction, if this place, which is now like a beautiful bath, whither so many come to cleanse themselves, should become one day a corrupted cistern, through the relaxation and sloth of those who dwell in it. Let us pray to God, gentlemen, that this misfortune may not happen. Let us address ourselves to the Blessed Virgin, that, by her powerful intercession, and through her immense desire of the conversion of sinners, we may avoid such a misfortune."

It was by these and similar motives that Vincent animated his company, never to calculate the trouble or the expense of those holy exercises. On this point, as well as on all others, he gave them examples more powerful than his words. The more he advanced in age, the more, contrary to the custom with old men, he became piously prodigal; his charity knew no bounds. In fine, he went so far, that he received as many persons for the exercises as he could possibly receive. From a calculation made, during the twenty-five last years of his life, nearly twenty thousand persons made retreats in his house, that is to say, eight hundred were received in it every year. It is true that some of them paid a part of their expense; but it is true also that the greater part gave nothing

at all, either because the mediocrity of their fortune did not permit, or because they imagined, as some do now, that the retreats of St. Lazarus were the object of a foundation, and that the collection of strangers received there was less a duty purely gratuitous charity, than an obligation of justice.

As it sometimes happens that pious persons do not always think alike, there were some among the children of Vincent of Paul, who considered his liberality excessive, and complained of him to himself. Those complaints, which he refused a long time with the arms of charity, recurred so often, and it was represented to him in so strong a manner that his house was on the point of destruction, that it was thought at last that his zeal would be confined within narrower limits. Not to resist altogether remonstrances which appeared just, he took upon himself the care of receiving all who would come, and of making a choice of them. But when he came to the point of admitting some and rejecting others, his heart was so affected that he could hardly refuse any one. The consequence was that he admitted more on the first day than they had ever been accustomed to receive. In vain did they tell him, what they had been obliged to repeat to him more than once, that there were no more rooms in the house, he calmly answered that he would give his own.

If it cost him much to bear such a heavy burden, it must be acknowledged that he was, even during his life, recompensed a hundred fold for it. As he desired that those of his houses which had the means, should imitate the example of the mother house in Paris, he saw by himself, or learned from undoubted testimony, the inconceivable fruits which the spiritual retreats produced on all sides. He received a prodigious number of letters on this subject, all tending to congratulate him on the blessing which God gave to his zeal and to that of his children. Priests, curates, bishops, and amongst others the baron de Renty,* thanked him a thousand times for having opened a new way of sanctification to pastors and people.

* Gaston Jean Baptiste, baron de Renty, born in the diocese of Baieux in 1611, died the 24th of April 1648. Dr. Burnet, bishop of Salisbury, has done justice to his virtues.

But it was not only in France, that God gave his blessing to the retreats made by Vincent or his companions: his hand was with them in Italy as well as in France. Cardinal Durazzo, who did honor to the Roman purple by his alms, his zeal and his vigilance, had no sooner established the children of our holy priest at Genoa, than he desired to try whether they would be of as great advantage to the ecclesiastics, as they had been to the country people of his diocese. He invited those of the curates in whose parishes they had made missions to come to the capital. The greater number obeyed with pleasure, and were rewarded for their docility. Their modesty, the strict silence which they observed, their simplicity in giving an account of their meditations, were sensible marks of the renovation operated in them by the Holy Ghost. Conversions took place which, if we suppose with a holy father that an unfortunate ecclesiastic is scarcely ever converted, must appear miraculous in an extraordinary degree. Repentance was manifested more than once by confessions perhaps too public. The spirit of humility and compunction was so prevalent, that its sallies could not be moderated but with difficulty; which occasioned one of those gentlemen to exclaim one day: "We are here in the valley of Josaphat: every one acknowledges his misery. After all, happy is the one who, by this anticipated confession, may be able to avoid that of the great day of the Lord!"

It was the consideration of so much good, of which the prelates gave Vincent of Paul an exact account, that rendered him so firm in not allowing his house to give up the retreats, so long as it was possible to bear the expense. It was through the same motive that he examined before God, whether he could not procure in some community of religious women, the same advantage for persons of the other sex, which they could not enjoy in the houses of his congregation. Charity, which renders every thing easy, did not long delay giving him the means. It was not enough for the father of the poor to have established a congregation of priests almost entirely devoted to their service, it pleased heaven that he should also give rise to a numerous band of virgins, whose zeal had, in

some respects, a more extensive object, and who, without distinction of age or sex, should perform in favor of the orphan and the indigent what the more important occupations of the apostolical ministry or the rules of propriety would not allow him to do himself. As the formation of this great establishment is essentially connected with the history which I write, it is necessary to make known its origin, its functions, and its progress.

Vincent of Paul had now established the confraternities of charity in favor of the sick poor about seventeen years. That association of mercy, having spread from the country into the cities, a great number of ladies of rank had engaged in it. But that which rendered these assemblies more brilliant, contributed by degrees to make them less useful. The first ladies of rank who engaged in them, had done it through choice, and piety induced them to serve the poor personally. It was not quite so with those who succeeded them. Some joined them, because it was the fashion. Others acted, it is true, through purer motives; but their husbands, who feared the effects of unwholesome air, would not allow them to yield to their zeal. It was necessary then to rely upon servants; and as the greater part had neither affection nor skill, an establishment which required a great deal of both, was daily falling to decay.

To remedy this disorder, it was thought necessary to have female servants, whose only occupation should be to distribute every day to the sick the nourishment and remedies which their sickness required. This project was good; but before carrying it into execution, it was necessary, above all, to find persons who would undertake it; and also, after having found them, to form them to an employment which requires much capacity and virtue, and more virtue than capacity. These two things were not easy, and the second was yet less so than the first.

After many efforts, and still more prayers, the saint thought at last that he ought to yield to the entreaties of Madame Le Gras, who, full of tenderness for the poor, had been waiting during two years for the permission from her director, to con-

secrete herself to their service by an irrevocable vow. Towards the end of the year 1633 he sent her three or four young girls from the country who appeared disposed for the most arduous duties of charity. The great talents which God had given to the holy widow for this kind of education, were soon manifested. These young girls, whom the urgent necessities of the poor did not permit her to cultivate long, edified all the parishes into which they were sent. Their modesty, their eagerness to serve the sick, the sanctity of their lives charmed those who saw them. Such beautiful examples moved several young persons of their age and sex, who came to offer themselves, to render, like them, their humble services to Jesus Christ in the persons of the poor.

Such was the commencement of that company of Virgins, who under the name of *Daughters of Charity*, have now thirty-four houses in the city of Paris. As small in its birth as the mustard seed, it has now become a great tree. Its roots, nourished less by the substance of the earth than by the dews of heaven, have extended into every part of France, into Lorraine and even into Poland; and we will soon see the orphan for so long a time neglected, the desolate widow, the soldier covered with blood and wounds, the wretched poor, the sick of all kinds, reposing under its healthful branches, and there finding nourishment, vigor and life.

Vincent and the pious Madame Le Gras had neither foreseen nor hoped for such rapid and extensive progress. But when they saw that God, satisfied in a manner with having drawn the outlines of his work, chose to confide it to their care that they might give it the finishing stroke, they both endeavored to extract from this precious talent, all that it was capable of producing. Their intention had been at first only to assist in the parishes those of the sick who were deprived of necessary aid. When the designs of God became afterwards manifest, the holy institutor charged them by degrees with the education of the foundlings, and the instruction of young girls who were without the means of obtaining it; with the care of a great number of hospitals, and even of the criminals condemned to the galleys. As these different occupa-

enough for vigorous men, it is certainly enough for persons naturally feeble.

As regards their exercises of piety, some are prescribed by the common rule, others they must refer to their confessor. But both are subordinate to the wants of their neighbor. At the first cry of the poor they must fly to their succour. But whatever zeal they must have for procuring corporal health for the sick, they must be much more interested for the health of their souls. As the voyage of eternity is performed but once, as the main point is to perform it well, and for that end great dispositions are required, they must, to prepare the minds and hearts of the dying, profit by every moment of life that remains to them. In the beginning they must endeavor to inspire them with a lively horror of their sins; and if there be still time, dispose them in an earnest manner, but in general, to make an exact confession of all their miseries; if time presses, they must aid them to conceive a sincere sorrow for their past disorders, and a firm resolution to die rather than fall into them again.

These rules, after having been practised for more than twenty years, were approved by the cardinal de Retz, archbishop of Paris. The king confirmed the establishment by his letters patent, which are an eternal monument of his piety and of the esteem in which the Sisters of Charity were already every where held. They afterwards merited a still greater eulogy, not on account of their duties, which were always the same, but on account of the persons who fulfilled them. Vincent, believing that God would bless more particularly the poor serving the poor, admitted for a number of years into the new community, only persons of a middling rank. But young ladies of high standing having offered themselves to share with the former the abjection and merit of their employments, it was thought unjust to close against them a door which God himself seemed to open to them. A trial was therefore resolved upon, and it turned out most happily. The world then saw and still sees young ladies brought up delicately and accustomed to dress richly, embracing a state of life in which nature has much to suffer, honoring as their

masters unfortunate beings, who would not have been allowed to wait upon them in the world, and wearing with greater joy a poor coarse habit, than the followers of the world experience in their worldly and often scandalous attire.

I do not know whether this change took place during the life of the holy institutor: it is however certain that whatever may have been the condition of the Sisters of Charity in his time, he had always a particular respect for them. The very name of Servants of the Poor melted the heart of this father of all the afflicted. The protection which God grants to those who serve him in his members, was a guarantee to him against the innumerable dangers to which their virtue is exposed. He sent them sometimes to the armies, to take care of the wounded or sick soldiers, sometimes even to Poland, through Germany, amidst a multitude of heretics, without appearing to fear for them what he would have apprehended for others. He sometimes seemed to promise them, that heaven would rather work miracles in their favor, than abandon them: and heaven has more than once justified his predictions. There is an example to which all Paris was witness, and in which even incredulity would find it hard not to acknowledge the finger of God.

One of the sisters of charity having gone to wait upon a sick person in a house in the suburb of Saint-Germain, had scarcely entered it, when the edifice fell. Of thirty persons who were in it, every one was buried under its ruins, with the exception of a small child which was wounded, and the sister of whom we speak, who was not even touched. During this terrible accident she was on the corner of a floor, which did not fall, although all the other parts of the same floor fell in. She remained there motionless with a porringer which she carried in her hand. A shower of stones, beams, joists, chests and presses, which fell from the upper stories, grazed the place where she was; but they appeared to respect her: she came forth unharmed from this heap of ruins, amidst the acclamations of an immense body of people who had been attracted by this terrible accident.

The service which Vincent of Paul rendered the poor by

procuring a community which had no other object in view but their relief, was soon followed by a new establishment, which was for those very poor a source of advantage, of which the most vivid imagination can form but a very imperfect idea.

On his return from a journey in which, by order of the bishop of Beauvais, he made the visitation of the nuns of St. Ursula, the effects of which still subsist in the wise regulations which he left them, the lady of the late president Gous-sault proposed to him a good work which she had long had in contemplation. She was a lady eminent for her charity. Rich and beautiful, the world was offering to her in a second marriage every thing that was capable of flattering a young person of her condition. But grace was stronger than nature. Jesus Christ, poor and suffering in the poor, was the only spouse whom she desired to choose. She lost nothing and the poor gained a great deal.

The persons whom she most frequently visited, were the sick of the Hotel-Dieu of Paris, and they were the principal subject of the conversation which she had with Vincent of Paul. She represented to the holy priest with great power, that this vast hospital merited particular attention; that nearly twenty-five thousand patients were received in it every year, of every age, sex, country, and religion; that consequently an immense harvest could be reaped there, if it were well regulated; that, however, things were far from being so, and that she knew, from being an eye-witness of it, that the poor there were much neglected both for spiritual and temporal wants.

Vincent knew well that the best order did not prevail at the Hotel-Dieu: but he also knew that there are evils which must be tolerated, for fear, in trying to correct them, to occasion greater ones. He was therefore content to reply to the lady, that the house of which she spoke was governed by administrators whom he thought very wise, and that he had no authority to correct the abuses which might exist there as well as any where else. This reply was very judicious, and manifested much circumspection. Yet, as it afforded no

remedy for any thing, the zeal of Madame Goussault was not satisfied with it. She made new efforts, but she always received nearly the same answer.

What the love of the world does in the heart of a woman who is its victim, the love of God does still more easily in those virtuous ladies who think of nothing but his glory. Madame Goussault followed up her project; that is to say, she persisted in her desire that it should be put in execution, and what is more, that, Vincent should be the one to take it in hand, because she would then be certain that it would succeed. With this view, she paid a visit to the archbishop of Paris: she spoke to him in so striking and pressing a manner, that the prelate signified to the holy priest, that it would give him pleasure if he would undertake that good work.

Vincent, who had no longer any doubt of the will of God, invited some ladies of rank to assemble, on a certain day, at the house of Madame Goussault. The ladies de Ville-Savin, de Bailleul, du Mecq, de Saintot, and de Pollaillon met accordingly. The saint opened the assembly with a discourse so energetic, and developed so well the importance of the contemplated undertaking, that all resolved to engage in it. The affair was again brought forward at a second assembly, which, owing to the cares of the servant of God, was more numerous than the first. Elizabeth d'Aligre, wife of the chancellor of France, was there with Anne Petau de Traversi, and the illustrious Marie Fouquet de Belle-Isle. The last has obtained an immortal name by her attachment to God, her tenderness for the poor, and her submission to the most rigorous decrees of Providence; and never will it be forgotten that at the moment when she learned the humiliating disgrace of her son, the superintendent of finances, she pronounced at the feet of her sovereign master these words which will constitute her eulogium forever: "I thank thee, O my God. I have begged of you the salvation of my son: this is the road to it."

At this assembly they proceeded to the election of three officers, that is, a superior, an assistant, and a treasurer. Madame Goussault deserved to be and was in fact the superior

of the new company; and Vincent was appointed perpetual director. In a few years it became so flourishing, that it numbered two hundred ladies, some of whom, as the duchess of Mantua, were born to wear a crown. The more they testified their good will and ardor, the more our saint perceived the importance of guiding their zeal. It was on this account that he prescribed rules for them, from which they made an agreement never to depart. As his first glance at things was admirable, and as he saw objects in their whole extent, he remarked that the point was, first, to do good, without reproaching those who were at the head, with having neglected it; 2dly, to do it in sight of all who were willing to be witnesses of it; 3dly, to do it for the sick, whose souls were oftentimes more to be pitied than their bodies.

This project was successfully executed in every point. Those ladies, by their amiable and respectful manners, gained the hearts of the religious of the house. They had every liberty to visit the halls for the consolation of the sick, to speak to them of God, and encourage them to make a good use of their infirmities. They disposed them to make good confessions, by merely relating to them the manner in which they prepared themselves. They procured them enlightened directors, who were acquainted with different languages, a help of which they had hitherto been deprived. They banished the abuse of requiring of the sick to go to confession on entering the house; an abuse which occasioned a multitude of sacrifices, and in consequence of which the calvinists, for fear of not being so well treated, went to confession like the others. To these aids for the soul, were added, I do not say food, but comforts for the body. Every day, the Sisters of Charity, in a house rented expressly in the neighborhood, were preparing for a thousand sick persons, biscuits, preserves, jellies, even fruits, according to the season and their state of convalescence. It is impossible for such attentions to be paid, except by those who look upon the poor as their children; but we can only look upon them as such, when a lively faith makes us consider them the images of a God loaded with our miseries and infirmities.

The sight of a number of ladies of the first respectability who by turns performed the duties of charity with an attention and grace of which servants are not capable; this sight, I say, melted the hearts of the people and the nobility. The poor, who had the greatest share in these advantages, were extremely affected; and if we are permitted to judge of the change of morals by the conversions made in point of religion, we can yield to the most favorable conjectures, since in the course of a single year, the one in which the good work commenced, there were more than seven hundred and sixty, Turks, Calvinists, and Lutherans, of whom many had been wounded and captured at sea, who embraced the catholic faith. It was even so much the persuasion in Paris, that there was a particular blessing attached to the new society that good citizens begged and obtained their reception into the Hotel-Dieu, by paying very liberally for their expenses, on condition that they should be attended precisely as the poor of the house were.

Although the expenses which this assembly incurred for the sick, amounted to at least seven thousand livres a year, we must only look upon them as a prelude to the efforts which it made, some years afterwards, in favor of an innumerable multitude of the poor of the kingdom and the neighboring states: even these efforts, prodigious as they may appear, are but a portion of the immense good of which it has been the source. It was that society which, under the guidance of Vincent of Paul, laid the first foundations of the general hospital of Paris, and of that of Sainte Reine. It opened an asylum for foundlings and a safe retreat for many decent young women, by the establishment of the house of Providence. In fine, it was that society, whose charity extended itself even into Asia, Africa and America, where, by abundant alms, it contributed to the support of the ministers of the gospel, to sustain the new converts, to the redemption of captives, to the erection of many churches, and to the apostolical journeys performed in China and Tonquin by the bishops of Heliopolis, Bérite, and Metellopolis. Such a number of splendid actions require greater detail; but we

must wait until the order of time permits us to speak of them more extensively.

Notwithstanding these occupations and many others which the archbishop of Paris added to them, Vincent always pursued his two principal projects, the sanctification of the clergy and the instruction of the country people. He was not satisfied with what he had heretofore done for the aspirants to orders; but, as he could do nothing better, he prudently thought that if ecclesiastics were formed early to the virtues of their state, the first pastors would find in these young plants cultivated for a long time, the surest resources against disorder. With this view he established, at the college des Bons Enfants, a seminary according to the plan of the council of Trent; he received a number of young clergymen, from the age of twelve to fourteen, to whom his priests taught the chant, the ceremonies, and still more the gravity, recollection, and all the virtues becoming the holy ministry. But he afterwards perceived, as did also the bishops, that this plan, beautiful as it was, would be very difficult in its execution. This forced him, six or seven years afterwards, not to abandon his enterprise, it is true, but to add something to it, by establishing, with M. Bourdoise his friend, seminaries on the same footing as they now exist in most of the diocese of France, as we shall mention in its place.

As to the instruction of the country people, the saint multiplied his missions in proportion as God multiplied his company. By degrees his priests visited a great part of our provinces. Those which were most exposed to the contagion of heresy were commonly preferred to others, because their wants were more pressing. It was for this reason that he wished that two of his missionaries should labor two whole years in the diocese of Montauban; and although they had been sent principally to strengthen the catholics who were in danger of losing their faith, God gave them the grace to convert twenty-four calvinists. They had no less success in the diocese of Bordeaux. As they avoided in their sermons every thing like controversy, many of the pretended reformers were always amongst the numbers of their hearers: but as they

took care to place in a strong light the beauty of our holy religion, there were always some, returning to the unity.

It would seem that such success, of which the prelates, the curates and the nobility gave the holy priest an exact account, could not fail to console him; yet they more than once alarmed the truly christian friendship which he nourished for his children. He feared lest the benedictions which were showered upon them by pastors and people, might at last weaken their humility. After the example of holy Job, he sanctified himself for them; and he offered every morning the victim of expiation for the faults they might have committed. This precaution did not satisfy his tenderness. He took care, in congratulating them on their spiritual conquests, to direct their minds to Him who was the author of them. Nor did he fail to share in their functions, whenever the important affairs with which he was intrusted, left him a little respite; and he then chose the most laborious missions. It is probably for this reason that he formed the design of putting himself at the head of his priests, to commence one in the Cévennes, which we ought not to omit here.

Every one knows that the Cévennes are a chain of high mountains, which extend for nearly thirty leagues in the diocesses of Alais, Uzés, Mende, and in a part of Vivarais. It is also known that as they are difficult of access, heresy and that spirit of revolt which follows in its train, had made a rampart of them, which was more than once the stumbling block of our troops. Calvinism, at the time of which we speak, had, as it were, its head quarters there. Its ministers, like furious wolves, made frequent excursions into the neighboring plains, from whence they always carried away some of the flock of the Son of God. The fear of still greater ravages induced Sylvester de Marcillac, bishop of Mende, to expose his situation to the servant of God. Vincent gave him aid as soon as he was able; and by the conduct he held at this time with a man of whom we are going to speak, he showed, that, in his opinion, there was no science nor erudition to be put in competition before God with the labor of a simple country mission.

Our saint had at Rome one of his priests, named Du Coudrai,

who was perfectly acquainted with the Syriac and Hebrew languages. Some persons of distinction, who were well disposed towards Vincent of Paul and his institute, begged Du Coudrai to give a new Latin version of the Syriac text. They were persuaded that a work of this nature would do honor to a rising congregation, and would not be useless to the church. They also wished him to write against the Jews, and in order to contend more successfully with them, that he should make use of their own books, which he understood better than their most learned rabbins. Du Coudrai listened willingly to these two propositions; but before giving his consent, he wished to know what his superior would think of it. Vincent, the humble and charitable Vincent, entreated him not to think of it. He represented to him, that such works nourished the curiosity of the learned, but contributed nothing to the salvation of the poor people, for which Providence had chosen him; that a more urgent necessity called him elsewhere; that there were actually in France thousands of souls, stretching out their hands to him, and telling him in the most moving manner: "Alas! sir, you have been chosen by God, to contribute to our salvation; have pity on us. We have for a long time been buried in sin and ignorance. To be relieved from them we need neither Syriac nor Latin versions. Your zeal and the miserable jargon of our mountains, will be sufficient for us. Without that, we are in danger of perishing."

This letter, which was in the same spirit as the one which the apostle of the Indies once wrote to the university of Paris, concluded with entreaties still more urgent. The saint protested that he could not resist the solicitations of the bishop of Mende; and that he would himself go into the Cévennes, if he could find no other person to go in his place.

New embarrassments and a dangerous fall which he met with at that time, did not permit him to put his design in execution. Two of his priests took his place. They labored for nearly two years in that awful country, and had a good share of the chalice of the Lord. But at last God blessed their patience. The bishop wrote to our saint, that he had already received the abjuration of thirty or forty Huguenots; that there

were as many more who, in a few days, would renounce their errors, and that the last mission had produced incredible fruit.

Some time after, the king proposed another mission to Vincent. The terrors of war, after having laid waste the extremities, were penetrating gradually into the very heart, of the kingdom. The Spaniards, led on by the famous Jean de Wert and Prince Thomas, took in a few days la Capelle, le Catelet and Corbie. The loss of the last place threw Paris into such consternation, that a great number of inhabitants left it, with their most valuable effects. The cardinal of Richelieu, who had entered the capital to remove fear, caused twenty thousand men, mostly servants and apprentices, to be levied there immediately. The terrified Parisians gave more than was necessary for the sustenance of this body of military. The house of St. Lazarus, whose members were then in their annual retreat, was used as a place for exercise, and in the space of eight days, seventy-two companies were trained there. The king, who believed that he would succeed against his enemies, if he could succeed in obtaining the favor of the God of Armies, wished that great attention should be paid to the sanctification of the troops; and it was according to the direction of this religious prince, that the chancellor requested Vincent of Paul to send twenty of his missionaries to the camp. A report but too well founded that a contagious disease had broken out amongst the troops, was a motive for these worthy laborers to hasten their departure; and Vincent calculated so much upon their zeal, that to induce them to set out with greater diligence, he contented himself with writing to them that the plague was in the army.

Fidelity to the wise regulations which the saint gave them, according to his custom, drew down the blessing of heaven upon those worthy ministers and upon their labors: and on the twentieth of September 1636, four thousand soldiers had already approached the tribunal of penance, shedding abundant tears. That mission, which encamped and moved almost every day, served, not only for the troops of the king; it was also useful to a great number of parishes in which the army

remained, and which, with the permission of the bishops, profited by the occasion which God furnished them to become reconciled to him. Many, as well of the military as of the inhabitants of the country, died in an edifying manner. Moreover, as experience teaches that those who carry arms, are never more intrepid than when they are in friendship with God, that army, although composed in part of new troops, did wonders. Corbie, which the Spaniards had fortified as well as they could, capitulated eight days after the siege was opened. Its surrender spread alarm throughout Flanders, Picardy breathed again, and the inhabitants of Paris thought themselves safe. The priests of the mission returned thither completely worn out. Some of them had been attacked with the contagious disease; but God preserved them for his church, and it was not long before they rendered new services in many missions, and above all in those which were made at the entreaties of Mr. Noel Brulard, better known by the name of the commander of Sillery.

This distinguished person had gained great reputation in several important negotiations. By means of the commandery with which his order had invested him, he made a great figure in the world, and a very small one before God. Grace touched his heart; and in consequence of that idea of an ancient Father, that we are very miserable in living only for others, when we have to die for ourselves alone, he determined to give to his salvation all the remainder of his life. He began by quitting his hotel of Sillery and all its sumptuous apartments. He rid himself of the greater part of his domestics, after having rewarded them in proportion to their services. He sold his richest furniture, and gave very considerable sums for different charitable works.

Time only redoubled his fervor; and that fervor caused him to be thought worthy of the priesthood. His zeal was not confined to his own person. He undertook to provide for the spiritual wants of those of the curates of his order, who depended on him; and after having conferred about it with our saint, in whose hands he was like a child in the hands of its father, he obtained from the grand master of Malta, a com-

mission as visiter, with power to re-establish discipline. To give success to this important visit, it was determined that missions should be united to it, in order to reform at the same time the people and those who were at their head. The former were taught the great truths of christian morality; instructions were given to the latter on subjects proper to their state of life. The wisdom and zeal of the laborers drew down from heaven the most abundant benedictions upon their labors: they soon became that land which the Lord has blessed.

A commencement so happy encouraged the pious commander. To keep the streams in good order, he desired to purify the source, and for that end, to establish at Paris, in the house of the Temple, a kind of seminary, where those who wished to devote themselves to religion, might qualify themselves to do, in the benefices of the order, all the good which could be justly expected of them. But this excellent design succeeded badly, because it was too much hurried. Our saint made some stay in the Temple. He wished to act in accordance with his ordinary maxim, which was, not to do things hastily. Unfortunately, he appeared too slow for those who labored with him. They wanted to do every thing in a day; they did nothing at all. The commander who perceived it, although a little too late, redoubled his esteem and affection for the servant of God; and he gave him real proofs of it, by contributing to the foundation of the seminary of Annecy, and to the subsistence of the house of St. Lazarus, which the misfortunes of the times reduced some years afterwards to the greatest extremity.

These good offices, which will always be gratefully remembered in the congregation, and which are only a part of the holy actions of Mr. de Sillery, merited for him abundant graces, both during his life, and at his death which was precious in the sight of God. Vincent of Paul rendered him, during his last moments, all the services of which the most sincere gratitude is capable. The great example of faith, firmness and submission which he saw in this virtuous commander, indemnified him fully, for all the trouble he had taken for his order. The knights of Malta, than whom none

are better acquainted with the rules of politeness and respect, were very sensible of his attention: and, on the seventh of September 1637, the grand master Paul Lascaris, a descendant of the counts of Vintimille and of the ancient emperors of Constantinople, wrote to Vincent to return him his thanks.

About three weeks after the date of this letter, our saint received another from Mr. de Saint-Cyran, which was not altogether so polite. As this famous abbé is necessarily connected with the history we are writing, we must, in order to give a correct idea of the singular contests, which the holy priest had with him, retrace our steps a little.

Jean du Verger de Hauranne, abbé de Saint-Cyran, an intimate friend of Jansenius, after having spent some years in Poitou, came to Paris; and he there exhibited an air of austerity and zeal, which, although he performed no miracles, caused him to be looked upon as a new Elias. The bishop of Ypres, alarmed at his own system upon grace, sought protectors for it, and looked upon it as a point of importance to gain over some religious community. The abbé de Saint-Cyran made every exertion to help him in this matter. The marks of deference repeatedly paid him by our saint, led him to believe that he might at last speak to him more openly. He began to introduce some of his maxims: but he did it, at first, with so much artifice, that a man less attentive than our saint, would have been caught.

Every conversation, however, improved upon the preceding one. One day, having fallen upon some point of the doctrine of Calvin, the servant of God was much astonished to hear the abbé de Saint-Cyran take the part of that heresiarch. He represented to him that this doctrine had been condemned by the church. The abbé answered, "That Calvin had not had so bad a cause; but had defended it badly. *Bene sensit*," added he, "*male locutus est*."*

Another time, as Saint-Cyran grew warm in defending a point of doctrine condemned by the council of Trent, Vincent

* I follow here Mr. Abelli, bishop of Rhodes, author of the first life of St. Vincent of Paul, on account of the importance of the subject.

said to him: "Sir, you go too far. Would you have me believe a private doctor like yourself, in preference to the whole church, which is the pillar of truth? . . . How do you presume to prefer your judgment to that of so many holy prelates assembled in the council of Trent, and who have decided those points?" "Do not speak to me of that council," replied the Abbé de Saint-Cyran; "it was a council of the pope and of the scholastics, which was nothing but faction and cabal."

"Another day," it is still the bishop of Rhodes who speaks, "Mr. Vincent having said with his accustomed mildness to the abbé, who was coming out of his cabinet: 'Acknowledge, sir, that you have just written something of what God has imparted to you in your morning meditation.' Saint-Cyran answered: 'I confess that God has imparted and imparts to me great light. He has made known to me that there is no longer a church. . . . Five or six hundred years ago, the church was like a great river, the waters of which were clear; but now what seems to us a church, is but a muddy stream,' &c. 'What, sir,' replied Vincent, 'would you prefer your own private opinions to the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, who promised to build his church upon the rock, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against her? The church is his spouse, and he will never abandon her.'"

This argument was simple, but it was strong. To get rid of it, the abbé answered him: "It is true that Jesus Christ has built his church upon the rock; but there is a time to build and to destroy. She was his spouse; but she is now an adulteress and a prostitute: it is for this reason he has repudiated her, and will substitute another in her place, who will be faithful to him." At these words, our saint, stunned and seized with horror, stood in need of all his moderation. He confined himself, then, to replying to the innovator, that he ought to mistrust himself, and that he lost sight of the respect which was due to the church. Saint-Cyran who easily lost his patience, replied in an angry tone: "And you, sir, do you know yourself what the church is?" Vincent gave merely the definition found in the catechism for the

children. He answered that the church was the assembly of the faithful under the guidance of its lawful pastors, &c. "You understand nothing but high Dutch," answered the abbé, in a rage; "you are an ignorant man: far from being at the head of your congregation, you should be expelled from it; and I am surprised that they suffer you in it." "I am more surprised at it than you, sir," replied the man of God; "and I know well that if justice were done me, they would not fail to dismiss me." Thus ended this interview, in which Vincent of Paul and Saint-Cyran maintained their characters admirably; the one by his unalterable humility; the other by a gloomy pride, which knows neither equity nor decency. From that time the holy priest broke off with him, as has been attested by M. de Montmorin, archbishop of Vienne, and the illustrious Abbé de Rochechouart de Chandenier, who had learned it from Vincent himself.

However, as many excellent persons, and above all the Rev. Father de Condren, complained more and more of the perverse opinions of Saint-Cyran, Vincent, who would have done any thing to save him from the precipice in which he was on the point of falling, resolved to make another trial. Having paid him a visit, he endeavored to dispose him to receive favorably the advice he had to give him. He then spoke to him of the obligation of submitting his judgment to that of the church, and of having more respect for the council of Trent than he had evinced. He showed to him particularly, that some of the propositions which he had maintained in his presence, were contrary to the doctrine of the church. He represented to him that he was losing himself in a labyrinth of errors, and that, above all, he had been very wrong in trying to engage him and his congregation in them. The saint became animated in the course of the interview, and he spoke with so much force and solidity, that the abbé was silenced, and did not answer a word.

The good works which occupied Vincent of Paul at the time of the event which we have just related, did not make him forget the daughters of St. Francis of Sales. During the same year, 1637, he visited two of their houses. There he

beheld with great pleasure all that piety, peace and harmony could afford most pleasing and consoling. It must, however, be acknowledged that he found once an object calculated to move a heart like his, and to cause him to wonder at the rigorous trials, through which God is pleased from time to time to lead his elect.

A religious of great merit became all at once the victim of a temptation as violent, at least, as that of the doctor whom our saint had relieved, when he was almoner to Queen Margaret. This Sister, who, till that time, had been filled with the love of God, felt nothing but horror for the august sacrament of our altars, and an inflexible aversion for all the exercises of religion. When exhorted to bless the name of the Lord, the spirit of blasphemy seized upon her, and made her break out in imprecations. In the excess of her fury, she was sometimes tempted to kill herself, that she might, as she said, be sooner in hell, there to taste the pleasure of cursing God during all eternity. The superior of the house, after having uselessly exhausted all the remedies of art, and a part of those furnished by religion, applied to her with the liveliest confidence and devotion a small piece of the rochet of St. Francis of Sales; but that expedient did not succeed until some days afterwards, when Vincent having joined to it, in the course of his visit, the most fervent prayers, applied the relic himself, as if the holy bishop had wished to make it known, after his death, that he accepted the services which a priest whose virtue he had honored during his life, was pleased to render him in the person of his daughters.

However desirous our saint was, not to multiply the establishments of his company, he found that he could not long resist the solicitations of a number of respectable persons, who, charmed with the good done by his missionaries, asked for them with the most earnest entreaties. The diocese of Toul had just obtained them. Marie de Wignerod, who always honored Vincent as we honor the saints who are still upon earth, begged some also for her duchy of Aiguillon. The cardinal minister, whose requests amounted to orders, wished them both for the city of Richelieu, and the diocess

of Luçon, of which he had been bishop. To fill the vacuum made in consequence of these new establishments, our saint determined to form an internal seminary, where he would receive, not only priests already formed to the functions of the ministry, as had been done heretofore, but also young men less advanced, and who stood in need of being cultivated for a longer time.

An employment of such importance required a virtuous, capable, and experienced director; mild without weakness, firm without harshness, watchful without affectation, capable of humbling others without discouraging them, of managing the wavering without infringing on the rule, of strengthening those entrusted to him as much by his example as by the unction of his discourses; of distinguishing what is true and solid, from what has only the appearances of it, and who above all, should possess the great art of the discernment of souls. Vincent found all these qualities in the person of Jean de la Salle, one of his three first associates. He charged him with the care of this young and precious band, destined to combat one day for the salvation of the people; and besides the advice which he gave him, he desired him to consult those who, at that time, had the reputation of being the most successful in forming youth to the apostolical functions.

The servant of God always hoped that Providence, which had given birth to his congregation, would furnish subjects capable of fulfilling all the duties of it. His grand maxim was, that it belonged to God alone to choose his ministers; and that the vocations to which artifice gives rise, and which a kind of dishonesty nourishes, dishonor the flock in multiplying it.

To avoid the first of these faults, he made it an inviolable rule never to say a word to any one to induce him to enter into his congregation, and he strictly forbade his children ever to solicit any one. He would not even suffer them to bias any who might appear to have an inclination that way; and when a person hesitated between another company and his own, he was no ways backward in deciding against the latter. "O Sir!" said he, "we are not worthy to be com-

pared with that other holy community. Go to it, in the name of the Lord, you will be incomparably better off there than with us."

With regard to those who, having already taken their final resolution, begged admission of him, he did not receive them but with the greatest circumspection. He examined into their motives, dispositions, talents, and family. He represented to them, with a sort of exaggeration, the difficulties attached to the state which they desired to embrace. He asked them whether they would have fortitude enough, to bid an eternal adieu to their parents, to their most intimate friends, even to their country, should it become necessary to send them to foreign lands. The most precise answers on their part, did not satisfy this wise institutor. He required them to return several times, that he might be better acquainted with them; and whatever trial he might have made of their dispositions and perseverance, he never gave them his last word, until after they had made a retreat to consult the will of God.

To avoid the second fault, which is a part of what the laws call fraud and unfairness, the saint most carefully avoided to present youth only with flowers during the time of their trial, waiting to show them the thorns, for the time when they should have taken the last step. The plan of his seminary has nothing in it, it is true, which can overcharge nature; but it has all that is necessary to make every one feel the weight of the obligations that are to be contracted. Neither hair-cloth, nor mortifications, nor other fasts than those which oblige all the faithful, are prescribed; but in place of them, that is required which commonly costs much more, a complete separation from the world, an interior life, great fidelity to all duties, and, if possible, an inexhaustible fund of that holy unction, which must one day sustain men engaged in their state, in the most laborious functions of the ministry. It is with that view that they have always been accustomed to a painful and laborious life. To rise exactly at four o'clock in the morning during the most rigorous season; to make two meditations a day, and always in common; to nourish themselves by the reading of books best suited to young ecclesiastics; to pass no day

without reading, and even committing to memory some portion of the New Testament; to purify themselves by frequent confessions, strengthen themselves by holy communions, render to themselves at the end of each month, in a little retreat, an account of the progress which they have made in virtue, or rather of that which they have failed to make. These are a portion of the occupations of the internal seminary.

From this career, when they have completed it well, they pass to that of study. They espouse the opinions of no particular school: Plato and Aristotle are there esteemed, but truth is valued more than Aristotle and Plato. The great rule is, never to look upon any thing as true which the church has condemned, and to reprobate whatever she has thought proper to proscribe. This was the rule of Vincent of Paul, and it will always be that of his true children.

But if this holy man required that his company should be thoroughly instructed, as well in the dogmas which they were obliged to announce to the people, as in the morals necessary to guide them properly, his humility which nothing could escape, induced him to take extraordinary measures to remove from them that conceit and vanity, which are too frequently the companions of talents and knowledge. When he was charged with the direction of the seminaries, he proved by a long and judicious written argument, that, with the approbation of the bishops, it would be sufficient to explain a printed author, by pointing out the places where he had gone astray from the truth. He would have taken in very bad part, that any of the members of his company, when assisting at public disputes in the university and elsewhere, should not have looked upon themselves as the last of all, in every respect; and much more so, should they have shown a disposition to appear the first. I will give a singular and very striking example of it.

Jacques Corborand de la Fosse, an orator, a philosopher, a theologian, and so good a poet that Santenie looked upon him as his rival and often as his master, went one day to a tragedy which was to be represented in a famous college of Paris,

and took a seat which was destined for other persons. The principal sent him word by a servant to take another place. La Fosse, whom the spectacle had enlivened, said in good Latin to the servant who did not understand him, that he was well where he was, and did not think proper to change. The principal, hearing the answer, took him for a foreigner, and sent him a young regent, who paid him in Latin the same compliment that had already been paid him in French. La Fosse who possessed the language of Demosthenes perfectly, returned in Greek, compliments which tended to express that he did not like to change his place. The professor not being able to answer, returned to the principal and gave him an account of the bad success of his mission. The principal, fatigued at the delay, deputed to him the regent of rhetoric; but La Fosse spoke Hebrew to him. It was then, that a learned man of the company recognised him, and had him placed according to his merit and with great distinction.

As he was quite full of this adventure, he had no sooner returned to St. Lazarus, than he related it indiscreetly to his friends with all the fire of his imagination. Vincent was soon informed of it; and although he saw well that this was only a joke on the part of this young priest, he thought that he should mortify him a little. After having represented to him that a truly humble man does not seek the first places, nor to make himself known in public by his talents, he directed him to go and ask pardon of the principal and of the two regents whom he had disedified. La Fosse, who was never inflated by his talents, obeyed without saying a word. As he had to deal with persons who knew how to esteem merit, he was received with the greatest respect: it is even said that he was so well pleased with them, that, under a new impulse of his enthusiasm, he returned them his thanks in French, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; but fearing another-lesson, he did not boast of it.

With this talent for keeping his priests in humility, the servant of God had also that of encouraging them in their labors. Without ever praising them in their presence, he knew how to keep up a holy emulation in them, by his example,

by the unction of his words, and by the care he took to make known to them the blessings which God bestowed upon the labors of their brethren. On the other hand, they were all well persuaded of the affection which he had for them. A father could not love his children more tenderly than he loved them. His tenderness manifested itself in the reprimands which he was sometimes obliged to give them. In him they lost all that bitterness which seem inseparable from them.

It was above all in the persecutions which they had to undergo, or in their sickness, that they experienced his affection. He was not one of those devout persons who, always full of attention for themselves in their sickness, are satisfied with giving vague orders for the comfort of others, without seeming to care much about the execution of them. Vincent examined personally whether they were treated, as became men who often suffered from excess of labor; and he gave such express orders, that no one would have dared infringe them. Hence they could be seen flying instantly to the most barbarous countries, or to provinces where pestilence and death reigned; because they were sure to receive from him the best treatment, or from God the crown which he has prepared for those who combat to the end.

At the commencement of the following year, they gave him a new proof of their obedience, in a celebrated mission, which cost them a great deal. It was performed at Saint-Germain, where the king was with all his court. Vincent would have desired it to be made by other persons. His priests, destined to the salvation of the poor country people, seemed to him little calculated to evangelize the great ones of the world. But Louis XIII, having insisted on having his missionaries, he was obliged to obey. The commencement was trying. The firmness with which, in the sacred tribunal, they wished to oblige worldly females to observe modesty, produced a great commotion. They complained aloud of the pretended severity of the confessors, and ridiculed them in every way. But those men, who were accustomed to walk straight forward, continued to preach the gospel in all its purity, and to exclude from the participation of the holy mys-

teries, those persons, who, sometimes without passions, themselves, appear in such a manner as to excite them in others, and occasion the loss of multitudes.

However the calm soon succeeded the tempest. The unction of the spirit of God touched those who made the most noise. They even became so fervent, that having joined the charitable confraternity, of which we have so often spoken, they served the poor in person, and procured them most abundant help. There was scarcely a person in the house of the king, who did not endeavor to profit by the graces which heaven showered with so much abundance. That religious prince was very much affected by it, and he had the goodness to say to one of these worthy ministers, that he was very well satisfied with the exercises of the mission; that it was the proper manner to labor successfully, and that he would bear this testimony every where.

The cardinal of Richelieu, laborious as he was, found the labors of the missionaries excessive. He directed the holy institutor to give them a day of relaxation every week. Thus it is to the attention of that great minister that they still owe their weekly day of rest.

The queen was at that time in the early stage of pregnancy, and she gave a dauphin to France, that very year, after being married twenty-two years. To testify her gratitude to God, she displayed a great and pious liberality. The esteem in which she held Vincent of Paul did not allow her to forget the house of St. Lazarus. She made a present to the sacristy which was very poor, of a beautiful ornament of silver cloth. It seemed to have come in good season for the feast of Christmas. However, the humility of the saint would not permit him to use it. It was absolutely necessary to give him one of a more common quality.

Ann of Austria knew so well, by the effects of the first mission of Saint-Germain, what a truly apostolical zeal is capable of, that four years afterwards, she asked a second mission for the same city. It is true she had principally in view the salvation of a great number of laborers who were working at the buildings of the chateau: but the whole court profited

by it. The queen assisted every evening, with great fervor and devotion, at the sermons of a missionary distinguished by his talents and his apostolic zeal. Another gave every day in the chateau itself instructions of piety to the ladies of the queen. What was most singular, the dauphin, who was scarcely three years old, had, in his way, a share in the blessings of the house. Ann of Austria absolutely insisted that he should be taught his little catechism; and it was a young ecclesiastic of the congregation that was charged with this honorable duty.

It was probably this year that Vincent of Paul had the consolation of seeing Mr. Quérolet, that man who, from being a decided and scandalous libertine, had become a model of penance, but of a penance so frightful, that antiquity itself scarcely affords any thing to be compared with it. Mr. Bernard, surnamed the poor priest, who was like himself, a sensible proof of the power of the grace of Jesus Christ, accompanied him in the visits which he paid to some persons of eminent virtue. The reverend Father de Condren and Vincent of Paul were of the number. Mr. de Quérolet had with each of them a private conference, of which historians have not preserved the details, but which doubtless tended to animate his perseverance. It was at the sight of these perfect christians, that Vincent sometimes cried out: "I alone, a miserable sinner, do nothing but evil upon earth; I ought to desire that God would be pleased to remove me soon from it."

Yet this man, who looked upon himself as the most useless servant, was so much occupied and in so holy a manner, from morning till night, that his life was only a train of good works. We cannot even now conceive how a man so infirm, and who never omitted his exercises of piety, could attend so many different occupations, answer exactly such a prodigious number of letters received from all quarters, and form with so much care the two companies which he instituted. But these good works, which would suffice to exhaust others, cost him little. The remainder of his history will afford us some of greater importance.

Book Third.

ALTHOUGH Vincent of Paul has hitherto afforded us proofs of a virtue the most exact, and a charity the most extensive, we must acknowledge that his career, in his advanced age, is yet much more brilliant. Let us forget then, if possible, every thing he did during more than forty years; we shall still find enough to place him on a level with those men of mercy, who did honor to the church in her most splendid days. Compassion for the wretched and zeal for the salvation of sinners, will here, as elsewhere, constitute the primary trait in his character; but as the occasions will be more urgent than ever, we shall see him deserve in a more striking and distinguished manner the glorious name of Father of the Afflicted, which his age attributed to him. The aid which he is about to furnish to the indigent and suffering, will not be confined to some families, or parishes, or to a particular class of poor; it will extend to vast provinces, and in these provinces it will have for its object, persons consecrated to God as well as seculars; the nobles as well as the people. All these different conditions will come under the jurisdiction of his tender charity, because all will be found smitten by the hand of God, and reduced to the most humiliating necessity.

Lorraine and the duchy of Bar were the first theatres of his zeal. These two provinces, once so populous, so fertile, had, for the last thirteen years, for their sovereign Charles IV, a valiant, intrepid prince, eager for glory, strong enough to give uneasiness to his neighbors, too weak to contend against them, always ready to come to an accommodation, and still more so to break through his arrangements. A hero of this stamp had every thing that is necessary to wicked princes

for the desolation of their own dominions; and he could scarcely count upon the protection of the God of armies, particularly since, weary of his wife to whom he seemed to owe his crown, he had contracted a second and scandalous marriage with Beatrix de Cusance, princess of Cantecroix.

It was about the time that he was occupied with this criminal design, that Lorraine became a theatre of horror. The Imperialists, the French, the Spaniards, the Swedes, and the inhabitants of Lorraine themselves, laid it waste by turns, and sometimes all at the same time. The duke of Veymar, [4] at the head of his troops, who were rendered furious by the diversity of religion, did the most damage. His soldiers acted in this unhappy country, almost like furious wolves, when falling upon a flock of sheep. There was no longer security for virtuous females, even in the seclusion of the monasteries; no travellers were found on the high roads; no flocks were seen; no laborers in the fields; there was no rest for the man who slept beside another, through the fear of being murdered.

The greater part of the cities, towns, and villages were deserted; others were reduced to ashes. Those of which the soldiery had not gained possession, suffered all the horrors of pestilence and famine. Their livid, ghastly, disfigured inhabitants found themselves happy, when they could eat in peace the herbs and roots of the fields. Acorns and wild fruits were sold in the markets for the nourishment of men. The animals that died, the most infectious carrion, were sought for with an avidity approaching to madness. A mother made an agreement with another to eat her own child, provided her companion would grant the like favor. A man was hung at the gate of Nancy, who was convicted of having killed his own sister for a loaf of bread. All the horrors of the famines of Samaria and Jerusalem did not come up to what was seen there. We do not read that, during the siege of the holy city, the children devoured those from whom they had received life; these horrors were reserved for Lorraine; and I would not dare to relate them, if I had not before my eyes, cotemporary authors, who have transmitted to us the account of them. Hence the expression of Father Caussin

the confessor of Louis XIII: "*Sola Lotharingia Jerosolymam calamitate vincit.*"

The cities which the king had taken, or which were already under his dominion, as Nancy, Bar, Toul, Pont-a-Mousson, and some others, breathed a little longer; but they shared, at last, the fate of the rest of the province, and at the time to which our history now refers, were, like the others, reduced to the last extremity.

It was very difficult to relieve them. Five armies which France was keeping at the same time, consumed a part of the aid, which charity, in a less stormy period, would have consecrated to the wants of the indigent. Every one complained, as they complain in public calamities. They were terrified at the present, and the future was not less dark.

Things were in this condition, when Vincent, animated with the spirit of the first priest of the old law, undertook to place himself between the living and the dead, arrest the flames which consumed the multitude, and raise the standard of charity in a country where mercy was unknown, and where the laws emitted a sound as dying as those who had enacted them.

The servant of God rekindled, by the heat of his discourses, the spirit of compassion, so necessary, yet so rare in similar circumstances. He set in motion the pious ladies of his assembly. He had recourse to the duchess of Aiguillon, and even to the queen herself, although she had no reason to be contented with the country for which his solicitations were made. He always gave first the example of a holy and generous liberality. He preferred, in some measure, to see those of his congregation suffer, than to behold any longer the misery of the poor of Jesus Christ. From the time of the siege of Corbie, he had already retrenched something from their table; but at the time of the miseries of Lorraine, he reduced the community to brown bread. His children did not murmur, because he followed, more rigorously than any one else, the rule which he imposed on others.

The pains which he took were not without fruit. He found himself in a condition to save the life, and often the honor, of

the inhabitants of twenty-five cities, and of an immense number of towns and villages, which were at the last extremity. He caused the sick, who were often lying in the public places, to be furnished with all the help, which they could expect from the most tender charity. He clothed many, not only those of the lowest order of the people, of every age and sex, but also a number of young ladies of respectability, who were upon the point of perishing in more senses than one, of religious consecrated to God, who, more disfigured than those spoken of by Jeremiah, had hitherto announced uselessly to all Europe their affliction and poverty.

As a wise economy in the distribution of alms, is one of the best means to spare those who bestow them, and make them useful to those who receive them, Vincent took measures of the most consummate prudence in the distribution of those with which he was entrusted. He sent twelve of his missionaries, full of zeal and intelligence, into different parts of the country; he associated with them some brothers of his society, who were acquainted with medicine and surgery. He drew up for them long and wise regulations, by the observance of which they could neither give offence to bishops, governors, or magistrates. He prescribed to them to consult the curates, and when there was none, as it often happened, the most remarkable persons in the place, in order to avoid being deceived, and to proportion the aid to the wants, the number, and the condition of the sufferers. Although the ladies of his assembly left absolutely to him the employment of the great sums which they placed in his hands, he never did any thing without taking their advice, and often the orders of the queen, in order that he might follow in every thing the intention of the benefactors.

It was by pursuing this plan, that he was able to satisfy every body, and especially the poor, who are often intractable, almost always disposed to murmur, not thinking so much of the good done them, as of that which they have a right to exact. It is true that the holy ardor which he communicated to the best families of Paris, sustained them in the efforts which they made, and which posterity will scarcely

believe; but as the evil was almost universal, and in the highest conceivable degree, it was necessary, in a manner, to multiply, by attention and good order, the help, which, although considerable in itself, would have been very insufficient for the necessities to be relieved.

The city of Toul was the first which experienced the bounty of Vincent of Paul. His missionaries rendered there the most important services to a great number of sick, poor, religious, and above all, to two French regiments which had suffered much in an encounter with the troops of Jean de Wert, near Gondreville.

But this was trifling, when compared to the succors he procured for the inhabitants of Metz. That city was in much greater affliction than Toul. The crowds of poor who besieged it, both inside and out, had something frightful. It was like an army of wretches of every age and sex, which amounted sometimes to four or five thousand persons. Every morning ten or twelve were found dead, without counting those who, being caught rambling, became the prey of the wild beasts; for furious wolves were one of the scourges with which God afflicted this miserable people. The towns and villages were infested with them; they entered them during the night, by the breaches in the walls, and carried off every thing that could gratify their insatiable hunger. It was but the expression of that of the inhabitants. La Riviere, the surgeon of Marshal de Fabert, wrote to him from the chateau of Variye, that they had just brought to him a pot in which were, half-cooked, the feet, hands, and head of a girl, which a widow had prepared for a meal for her children, who had eaten nothing for several days.*

Such was the situation of Metz and its environs; but this was only a portion of the misfortunes of that unhappy country. The honor of the most chaste and virtuous persons was in danger. Famine, the mother of every excess, was upon the point of forcing several communities of religious women to leave their cloister, at a time when the strongest walls were

* Life of Marshal de Fabert, by Father Barre, vol. i, p. 255.

but a feeble rampart against licentiousness. Every resource was closed up; but Vincent knew how to find resources in abundance. He dispatched, with all diligence, some of his priests, to bring consolation to the afflicted, to preserve the lives of some, the honor of others, and endeavor to save all. The face of things changed soon, and Metz began to breathe. The eschevins, and the thirteen magistrates of the city, moved by this tender charity, returned the most humble thanks to the holy priest. But their letter, as well as those which he received at that time from the magistrates of all the other cities, was less to thank him for the past, than to solicit his aid for the future.

Great as was the desire of the servant of God to relieve at the same time every part of Lorraine, and the Barrois, it was impossible for him to do so. The first alms which he had sent to Toul and Metz; those which he soon after sent to Nancy and Verdun, where his priests remained at least three years; these alms, I say, amounted to so much, that they exhausted, from the commencement, his house, which he always taxed first, and those of a great number of pious ladies, to whom he had recourse when he wanted to relieve the poor. It was only at the end of the same year, 1639, that he was able to send some of his priests to Bar-le-Duc, and some months afterwards to Saint-Mihiel, and Pont-a-Mousson.

Those who were sent to Bar, found in that city about eight hundred poor, citizens and strangers. The latter were, for the most part, during the rigor of winter, lying upon the pavement in the streets, or before the doors of the churches. It was there that, overwhelmed with misery, consumed by hunger, and shivering with cold, they waited for, and received death, at almost every moment. In a few days two hundred and sixty of them, who were almost naked, were clothed. The hospital, by means of a regular monthly sum, was put in a condition to receive a greater number of sick. But as amongst these last, there were about eighty suffering much more than the others, our missionaries took them entirely under their care. Notwithstanding so much expense, the greatest was that incurred for receiving strangers, who, find-

ing no resource, either in the country which was no longer cultivated, or in the cities which they were often forbidden to enter, were withdrawing into France in crowds. The missionaries of Nancy directed them to those of Toul, the latter sent them to those of Bar; and in each of these places they gave them some money to continue their journey.

But, however great was the good of which we speak, the services rendered by the same priests in the order of salvation, were far superior. They taught the people to weep, not for their temporal misfortunes, but for their sins, which were the origin of them. Every one endeavored to recover the grace of God. But they all desired to be indebted for the life of their soul, to those alone to whom they owed their corporal life. One of these laborious ministers heard at Bar, in the space of one month, upwards of eight hundred confessions, many of which were general ones; and he had the consolation to nourish with the bread of angels those very persons, to whom he had so often distributed terrestrial food. Nature was at length exhausted. The two priests, who labored at Bar, were attacked by a violent disorder. One of them, who was young, and never spared himself, was carried off by the force of the disease.* He was buried in the church of the college of the Jesuits. Father Roussel, who was then rector of that institution, was so struck with the invincible zeal of this worthy missionary, that he inserted the history of it in the Journal of his Rectorship.

Vincent had not been able, as yet, to do any thing for the city of Pont-a-Mousson. It was only towards the month of May, 1640, that his priests carried thither their first alms. However accustomed to the misery of Lorraine, they were terrified at that which this unfortunate district offered to their eyes. They found there four or five hundred poor, so hideously disfigured, that they resembled skeletons more than men. There were in addition, a hundred sick, fifty or sixty persons who, though reduced to the last extremity, were

* His name was Germain de Montevit. He was of the diocese of Coutance. He died the 29th of January, 1640, at the age of twenty-eight.

ashamed to beg, nuns placed in circumstances of extraordinary necessity, and some persons of quality, who felt doubly the weight of the most cruel indigence.* Hunger amounted to rage; and the *procès verbal* drawn up by the authority of the ordinary, makes mention of a child who, having approached some young men of a more advanced age, was torn to pieces by them and devoured.

The missionaries followed, at Pont-a-Mousson, the same method as in the other cities of Lorraine; that is to say, to profit by the good sentiments which had been inspired into this afflicted people by the succors they had received, a mission was begun. It was attended with all the success that could be expected in such a favorable conjuncture. But alms and instruction were not the only favors which Vincent procured for the two duchies. As a great number of parishes were destitute of pastors, and children often died without having received baptism, the servant of God, whose charity was attentive to every thing, sent two priests there, who began immediately to visit the diocese of Toul, baptise all who had not participated in that benefit, and teach the most intelligent persons of each canton, the manner of administering this sacrament to children who might be born afterwards, during their absence.

The accounts which our saint received from Saint-Mihiel, exhibited the same misery as in Pont-a-Mousson. The priest he had sent there, wrote to him that he had found in that small city such a quantity of poor, that he could not give to all; that there were more than a hundred whose skins were so dried up, that they could not be looked at without horror; that in general it was the most horrid spectacle that could be witnessed; that at the last distribution of bread, there were eleven hundred and thirty-two poor, without counting the sick, who were very numerous; that charity so well applied, moved

* I learned from the Abbé Tervenus, curate of St. Rock, at Nancy, that a young girl of good condition having found at the door of a surgeon the blood of a sick person, which had been thrown out, seized upon it with a kind of fury. That respectable pastor, who died at a very advanced age, had this fact from his mother, who was witness to it.

even the rich, who wept through tenderness ; that a Swiss, who was a Lutheran by profession, had been so affected by it, that, after having abjured his heresy, he received the sacraments, and died in a very edifying manner. He added that the priests of the country, who lead an exemplary life, had neither bread nor other provisions, so that a curate of the neighborhood had been reduced, to support life, to follow the plough with some of his parishioners.

These letters, and several similar ones, induced Vincent to continue his aid to Saint-Mihiel ; and although the very name of that city was hateful to France, because, some years before, a cannon-shot from the ramparts, had broken the carriage in which the king was, our saint acted with so much energy, both with the king, in inducing him to diminish the garrison, and with many charitable persons, that the place was always comprised in the distribution of alms which flowed into Lorraine. The number is surprising, but the reader would be much more surprised, were I to show, by entering into a detail, that they are but a part of the good done by our saint in that unfortunate country.

It was not, however, in their own country alone, that the natives of Lorraine experienced the charity of Vincent of Paul. A great number had proofs of it in Paris. The saint having been informed by some of his company, that there were in that province many young girls, even of high rank, who, being deprived of their relations, and of every other help, found themselves exposed to the insolence of officers and soldiers, he caused one hundred and sixty of them to come to Paris, at various times ; and one of his priests defrayed their expenses during their journey. A great number of young boys who were perishing, were also sent to Paris. Vincent shared immediately with Madame Le Gras, the care of this new colony. The pious widow received those of her sex into her house, and by degrees placed them in situations suited to their condition. The servant of God took care of the boys ; he received and supported them, until such time as he could find employment for them.

It was not long necessary to invite the inhabitants of Lor-

raine to come to France. The hand of God continued to afflict that province to such a degree, that those of the people who were not under the dominion of the king, were seen leaving the province in caravans, escaping through the armies of the enemy, and risking every thing to seek an asylum in Paris, or in the cities of the kingdom. A great number of these poor refugees came straight to St. Lazarus, where they were sure to find a man, with whom all nations were as one in Jesus Christ, and who, when the duties of charity were in question, took care of the stranger without prejudice to the citizen. It required a heart as vast as his, not to be wearied with such an-endless concourse. But holy liberality was the basis of his disposition. He found the means to supply the wants of all ; and as he perceived that many of them, for the want of priests, some being dead, and others having retired, had not, for a long time, approached the holy mysteries, he caused missions to be made for them for two successive years, in the parish of La Chapelle, a small village at the gate of Paris. The ecclesiastics of the province there distinguished themselves by their assiduity in labor, and the ladies of his assembly by their alms.

It was about the same time that the holy man took upon himself the charge of a community of Benedictine nuns, who were on the point of dying with hunger. They had come from Rembervilliers to Saint-Mihiel to make an establishment. This was now out of the question ; the only point was to save their lives. The saint, who was informed of the pitiful situation in which they were placed, caused them to come to Paris ; they were fourteen in number, and they were received with all the attention due to virgins consecrated to God. The Countess de Chateau-Vieux, and the Marchioness de Baune, who had for a long time desired the establishment of a monastery destined to repair by perpetual adoration the outrages offered to Jesus Christ in the holy eucharist, thought them calculated for that object, and they were consecrated to it by Ann of Austria. It is to this day one of their first duties, and they fulfil it day and night, with great fervor and edification.

As the misfortunes of Lorraine still continued, and Charles IV, more eager for sieges and battles than attentive to the tranquillity of his people, seemed to have determined on his ruin, a number of persons of rank gathered what they could of the wreck of their fortune and came to Paris. But after having exhausted every thing there, the greater part of them found themselves reduced to want, which they felt the more severely, as they dared not make it known. An honorable person gave notice of it to the holy priest, and proposed to him to lend them some assistance. Vincent, who, for several years had laid his house and his best friends under contribution, would naturally find himself more embarrassed by such a proposition; he, however, received it, not only with joy, but with gratitude: "Oh! sir," replied he, "what a pleasure you afford me; yes, it is just to relieve these poor noblemen, to honor our Lord, who was most noble and most poor at the same time."

In order to execute this new project, the saint resolved to form an association of noblemen, full of faith and feeling, who should consider it a happiness to render to persons of their rank, all the services which they would wish to receive in similar circumstances. He assembled seven or eight of this character, at the head of whom was the Baron de Renty. He spoke to them in so moving a manner, that it was determined that all should tax themselves to relieve these afflicted noblemen. Vincent knew so well how to keep up their first fervor from month to month, that the work continued nearly twenty years. We may without hesitation rank this illustrious assembly amongst the great works promoted by our saint. It required the more courage in him, not to abandon Lorraine and its inhabitants, as at this very time the attention of the servant of God was called to other persons, who yielded neither in birth nor necessity to the former.

England, destined, as it would seem, to be the theatre of the most surprising revolutions, had taken up arms against its king. Oliver Cromwell, to whom eloquence, intrepidity, dissimulation, a consummate hypocrisy, and the most vindictive disposition, afforded every qualification to be one of those

cool and ferocious tyrants, who seem reserved for crimes of the first order; Cromwell, I say, under the pretext of re-establishing the purity of the gospel, accustomed insensibly the people and the upper house of parliament, to abhor their lawful sovereign; and he was showing, at a distance and gradually, to the unfortunate Charles, the disgraceful scaffold, upon which, a few years afterwards, his very subjects were to cause him to be shamefully beheaded. It is easily supposed, that, during the course of such terrible commotions, the Catholics had every thing to fear from the rebels. This determined a considerable number of Scotch and English lords to retire into France, the ordinary asylum of all those persecuted for religion's sake. It was resolved in the assembly, lately formed by Vincent among the French nobility, that they would do for the English noblemen, what had been done for those of Lorraine. Death, which carried off Mr. de Renty in the flower of his youth, rendered the continuation of this aid much more difficult; but it did not diminish it, and Vincent continued it during almost all the rest of his life.

Although the holy priest would have contributed to so many good works, only by his exhortations and the continual efforts he was obliged to make during so many years, nothing more would be required to make his memory dear to all those acquainted with true merit and perfect Christian charity. For who does not know how much it costs to beg incessantly, even when we do not beg for ourselves. But the servant of God did not confine himself to words. "He was always the first to give. He opened his heart and his purse; so that, in order to finish the good work which was begun, he deprived himself of what was even necessary for his support." These are the very words of one of the first noblemen of that illustrious assembly. But what would he not have said, had he known that the holy man had given the last cent that he possessed in the world; nay more, that he was compelled to borrow money for his own sustenance, and in order to relieve the wants of the poor. But he never stopped to calculate the enormous expense which he was obliged to incur. That which most grievously afflicted him during the continuance

of a protracted and sanguinary war, was the blasphemy and licentiousness, the sacrileges, profanations, and unheard of cruelties so frequently committed; sometimes even against innocent persons who were exposed to suffer most; besides the complete ruin of a great number of families that were left destitute of every earthly comfort, and consequently exposed to all the temptations which privation and poverty bring in their train.

The reflections which he made upon all these evils determined him to risk a step, the success of which was more than doubtful. He went to visit cardinal Richelieu, and after having represented to him with all possible delicacy the misery of the people, the injury offered to God, and all the disorders commonly consequent upon an envenomed war, he threw himself at his feet, and said to him, in a tone of voice expressive both of grief and charity: "Restore peace to the people,—have pity on us." The minister answered him with much kindness, that he was seriously laboring for the pacification of Europe; but that it did not depend upon him alone, and that there were a great many persons both in the kingdom and out of it, whose concurrence was necessary to attain that object. Thus the distress continued more or less in Lorraine; and our saint, without arresting the course of his alms, found other means to send frequent supplies to Chateau-Salins, Dreuze, Marsal, Moyenvie, Remiremont, Epinal, Mircourt, Châtel-sur-Moselle, Stenai, and Rember-villiers.

It is difficult to make an exact calculation of all the money which St. Vincent distributed in Lorraine and le Barrois. The person who was entrusted with its conveyance made it amount to one million six hundred thousand livres of French money, a sum with which as much could be done then, as with three millions now, and which although very considerable in itself, was still more so, at a time when the distress was extreme, and when the wealthiest families found themselves embarrassed. Yet this was only a part of what the holy priest did in favor of the two duchies: he sent thither, moreover, at different intervals, nearly fourteen thousand ells of cloths of

different qualities, for the nobility, the citizens, the persons consecrated to God, and often whole families, who were in extreme want. If to this prodigious expense be added that which he incurred to procure linen and ornaments for the churches which had been stripped, to bring to Paris the young persons of whom we have spoken, maintain in that place those who came thither of their own accord until they could obtain situations, in fine, to support during several years so many respectable families which were in the most deplorable state, the very enemies of a saint, who should have only admirers, are agreed that what he did in favor of Lorraine amounts to a miracle; and that it is impossible not to perceive therein the operation of the most generous and persuasive charity.

I must not omit a circumstance here which was then, and must be still, regarded as a sensible proof of the protection of God. In this time of distress and carnage, travelling in Lorraine was attended with great danger. Every place was full of soldiers, robbers and banditti, who overran the country, the most moderate of whom were those who were satisfied with plundering travellers. It was through the midst of so many dangers that a brother of the mission, charged by St. Vincent with the transportation of the alms, made as many as fifty-four trips without meeting with any accident. He never carried less than twenty thousand francs: he often carried ten or eleven thousand gold crowns, and on one occasion he had as many as fifty thousand livres. It is true that he was both cunning and intelligent; but he always experienced, so as to admit of no doubt, that the God of Vincent of Paul was with him, and that he kept him in all his ways.

Sometimes he would join a convoy of armed men, who were attacked, defeated, and taken prisoners; but still the brother always found some means to escape the assailants. At other times going in company with some travellers, he would withdraw from them, for a moment, by a secret order of Divine Providence, and at that very moment they would be stripped and plundered by the robbers, who fortunately had not perceived him. He often passed through woods filled

with disbanded soldiers: as soon as he would discover them, he would take care to hide either in some bush or even in the mud his purse which he always carried in a wallet like the beggars, then he would advance to meet them like a man who had nothing to fear. He would continue his journey with them for some time, and when they would have left the place free, he would return and take his money. One day when he had thirty-four thousand livres, he found himself attacked on a sudden by a man well mounted, who, pistol in hand, obliged him to advance before him, that he might plunder him in a private place. The brother, who watched him closely, seeing him turn aside his head, let fall his purse. Having gone about a hundred steps farther, he began to show marks of the most profound respect to the horseman, which marks being deeply imprinted upon the ploughed ground, might serve to guide him back to his treasure. In fact he found it again after he had undergone a rigorous search, in which he lost nothing but his knife, because he had nothing else to lose.

As it became known by degrees throughout Lorraine that it was he who carried the alms, it became very difficult for him to conceal his movements. But God armed in his favor even those whom he had most to fear, or rendered harmless all the snares that were laid for him. A captain in ambuscade near Saint-Mihiel's made him known, without any evil design, to his soldiers; but seeing that they were about to fall upon him, he cocked his pistol and declared in a resolute tone that he would blow out the brains of any one who "should be so mad," to use his own words, as to injure a man who was doing so much good. Some Croets who knew that he was at Noméni, having in his possession a good deal of money, placed scouts in every direction that they might not miss him. On going out of the chateau, which by entreaties he succeeded in leaving by a concealed door, he took at break of day, a by-path, in which he did not meet a soul. The marauders believed him to be still at Noméni, when he had already arrived at Pont-a-Mousson. They would scarcely give credit to those who assured them of his arrival in the latter city. They swore as usual, but their imprecations only served to show

that we are well taken care of, when we belong to God himself. The people in fine were so well persuaded that there was something miraculous in it, that they thought themselves in security, when travelling with this good brother. The Countess of Montgomery, whom the passports of three sovereigns had not been able to secure against pillage, and who, for fear of some new accident, could not resolve to go from Metz to Verdun, having learned that the brother had the same journey to perform, begged him to take a seat in her carriage, being persuaded, as she said, that his company would be a greater security than all the passports in the world. The event justified her confidence : she arrived at Verdun without meeting with either soldiers or robbers.

When he returned to Paris, the queen, who had heard of his dexterity, desired to see him. She listened several times, with great pleasure, to the recital of his stratagems, and to the ingenuity with which he varied them when the first became common. For his own part, he was well persuaded, and he frequently repeated this conviction, that such a visible protection of God was but the effect of the faith and of the prayers of the holy man who had sent him. It was to those same prayers that those of his priests who distributed the alms, attributed more than once the multiplication of them in their hands, and without which they could not conceive how, with sums which, when divided into twenty-five or thirty parts, became very moderate, they could relieve so many poor persons, and supply the wants of such a variety of necessities.

The embarrassment which the deplorable condition of Lorraine caused our saint, did not suspend the spiritual services which he had engaged himself to render to the poor country people. His priests, during the three first years in which that province required most attention, performed seventy missions. At the beginning of the year 1640, he sent a colony of them to Annecy, where Mr. Juste Guérin, the blessed Mother de Chantal, and Messrs. Sillery and Cordon, both commanders of the order of Malta, had established them. This good work was one of the best that Mr. de Sillery performed on earth. His death corresponded with the beauti-

ful and holy life which he led for several years. "He is gone to heaven," said Vincent in one of his letters, "like a monarch who goes to take possession of his kingdom, with a strength, a confidence, peace and meekness, which cannot be expressed.

The pious bishop of Geneva, who only thought of preserving the great good which St. Francis of Sales had effected in his diocese, prudently judged that the best means of success was to labor in the formation of good ecclesiastics, whilst he would labor at the same time to sanctify the people also. He proposed to effect these two objects through the priests whom Vincent of Paul had sent him. As to what concerned the people this was attended with no difficulty; all that was wanted was to make good missions: they took place at Annecy and in the country parishes. But the establishment of a seminary for the education of holy priests required much more deliberation.

The difficulty was to know whether in the erection of this seminary they should follow the plan of the Council of Trent, by admitting only young boys who, preserved in a holy retreat from the corruption of the world, should early imbibe the sweets of virtue and of ecclesiastical science, or whether they should only receive young clergymen who, having already arrived at an age sufficiently mature to choose a state of life, would appear to afford more certain and nearer hopes. The reasons for and against, were carefully weighed, but the reasons against the former and for the latter prevailed on account of the circumstances of times and places. The bishops of France, after many trials, came to the same conclusions; and it is notorious that in all, or almost all the seminaries of the kingdom, they only received young men who had completed their course of philosophy, and frequently even had commanded that of theology.

As soon as the servant of God saw the bishop of Geneva determined on the erection of a theological seminary, he reflected seriously on the means of making it a sacred and learned academy. He believed that all could be trained up to solid piety, to that plenitude of the sacerdotal spirit, and to that science

which embraces not only the dogma, but more particularly moral divinity. He wished that the conferences which were to be held twice a week upon the ecclesiastical virtues, should be moving and instructive; that without neglecting the chant and the ceremonies of religion, there should be a fixed time for teaching the manner of administering the sacraments, and of instructing the people, and teaching the catechism; that the explanations should be both clear and precise; that they should embrace every thing which might contribute to the direction of the people, and that those metaphysical questions, which a half instructed pastor sometimes knows better than is required, should be looked upon as of little consequence.

He was persuaded that the greatest genuises are not always those who succeed best in training youth, either because being puffed up with their own talents, they sometimes treat them with too much severity, or because they know not how to proportion their institutions to the capacities of their disciples. He feared above all things lest the director of a seminary should be persuaded that he had discharged every duty, when he had taught his class well. It is true that he looked upon science as essential, because an ignorant priest is a blind man who leads others into the precipice; but he gave the preference to piety. Hence he wished that all those who had charge of young ecclesiastics, should labor by their good example, by their continued watchfulness, and by a perfect detachment from the things of this world, to be duly imbued with the virtues of their state. But he thought at the same time, that to derive fruit from a seminary, it was necessary to pass a considerable time in it, and at least one year before receiving holy orders; that a bishop ought not to dispense any one from it, not even those who have most virtue, because they support the weak, and when the rule is general, no one asks to be exempted. The virtuous bishop of Cahors, Alain de Solminihac, followed these two principles invariably, and Vincent proposed his example more than once to the prelates who consulted him.

Filled with these luminous maxims and many others which the saint communicated to them, his priests did considerable

good, unostentatiously, and in every direction. The pious prelate of whom we have just spoken, that is to say, a man most reserved in bestowing praise, and who found nothing good but what was really so, wrote some years before his death to the servant of God, in these terms: "You would be delighted to see my clergy, and you would bless God a thousand times, did you know the good which your children have done in my seminary, and which is spread throughout the province." Thus spoke also more than twenty-five years after the death of Vincent of Paul, Jean d'Arenthon d'Alex, one of the most worthy bishops that has succeeded St. Francis of Sales." His commendation is inserted in his will. What state is better calculated to banish every idea of false praise than that of a man who considers himself about to appear before God.

The occasion which presents itself to say a word of this great bishop, obliges me to relate a fact which does him much honor, and perhaps so much the more as Jean d'Arenthon was yet young, and had not even received the tonsure, when Vincent saw him for the first time. He conceived a great affection for him, begged him to come and see him, and often repeated these words: "God wishes to make use of you, and I assure you that you will be one day the successor of St. Francis of Sales. He repeated the same prediction to the Abbé de la Pérouse, a nephew of Mr. d'Arenthon. If he had before his death, the consolation to see that he was not mistaken about the episcopacy of the uncle, he now sees in heaven, as all the diocess has witnessed, that he was not deceived with regard to his virtues.

I shall not speak here, either of the services which Vincent rendered to the priests of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, and of whom, at the request of their venerable curate, he made a very edifying community, nor of the second visit which he paid to the Ursulines of Beauvais; but I cannot pass over in silence what happened between him and the blessed Mother de Chantal, the last time she came to Paris. She expected to see him, the year before, at Anneci, where the bishop desired him to regulate the affairs of the seminary. But the necessi-

ties of the foundlings, which already engaged his time, did not permit him to go thither. Thus this interview, so much desired on both sides, did not take place until more than fifteen months afterwards. Madame de Chantal then made ample amends. The holy priest saw her several times at the monastery in the street Saint Antoine. She asked his advice with regard to her own particular conduct and that of her order, and she acknowledged with great gratitude that the advice of that great servant of God had been of much service to her. These are the words of the Abbé Marsolier in his history of the venerable mother.

The spiritual advantages with which God favored her through the assistance of our saint, were graces of preparation for her last sacrifice. Five weeks after her departure from Paris, she finished, by a most holy death, a life which she had passed in the exercises of christian and religious piety.* God revealed at the same time to his servant both the death and glory of Madame de Chantal, by a vision which has something in it of the majesty of those of the ancient prophets. We shall give the faithful account of the event.

When Vincent had learned by public intelligence that Madame de Chantal was at the point of death, he prostrated himself to pray to God for her: and according to his custom, he began by an act of contrition. He had scarcely finished, when he perceived a small globe, as if of fire, which, rising from the earth, went to join, in the upper region of the air, another larger and more luminous globe. These two globes, which after their junction made but one, rose still higher, and were lost in a third, which was infinitely more extensive and more brilliant than the others. Whilst the holy priest was occupied with this vision, an interior voice told him in a very distinct manner, that the first globe was the soul of Madame de Chantal, the second that of the blessed bishop of Geneva, and the third the divine essence: and that these two great souls, after being re-united, were, in a manner, swallowed up in the immense bosom of the divinity.

* She died at Moulins, on Friday, 13th December, 1641, at the age of sixty-nine.

Vincent learned some days afterwards that God had been pleased to take his servant. As particular revelations are still more suspected by truly wise persons than by those who have less knowledge, the holy man, without relying too much on what he had seen, followed the customary practice, and would pray for Madame de Chantal at the memento of the mass. The very moment he began to do so, he had the same vision as before. The same globes, the union of the first with the second, and of those two with the third, were presented to him, but accompanied by so vivid an impression and so perfect a conviction of the eternal happiness of that holy woman, that from that time he could not think of her, without representing her to himself as surrounded with the glory of the blessed souls. It was not, however, until after a conference with the archbishop of Paris and religious men well acquainted with the operations of God, that the holy priest made known this circumstance to some ladies of the Visitation, who, being overwhelmed at the loss which their whole order had sustained, stood in need of that consolation. A few days after, he drew up a relation of it, in which he renders to the sublime virtues of the illustrious deceased the justice due to them. As the church has solemnised this judgment by her own, it would be useless to say any thing more of it.

The happy death of the Mother induces us to say something of the services which Vincent endeavored to render to the daughters. In the frequent visits which he paid them, after St. Francis of Sales had made him their superior, his great, his only rule was to bring all the sisters in general, and each one in particular, to look upon their vocation as a peculiar grace; to lead a life conformable to their institute, and to sustain themselves by the spirit of faith so much recommended in the new law; to have a singular esteem for their constitutions and even for the counsels contained in them. He removed from their houses every thing that might have introduced in them the spirit of the world. Neither the contempt which he had to undergo, nor the losses which he had to fear, could induce him to relax on this capital point. He always refused with holy and generous firmness the entrance in these monas-

teries to ladies of the highest rank, and even to princesses who asked it, either to satisfy their curiosity or through an ill-directed devotion. Sometimes he did more. The queen had appeared to desire that one of her ladies of honor might retire into one of the houses of the order. A priest of the court had made the first proposition; Vincent used every effort to ward off the blow, and without failing in the respect which he had for that august princess, he prevailed on her to induce the lady to choose some other place for her retreat. It was because this truly enlightened director feared lest the air of the world might enter into the cloister in the train of those females who are often so full of it, and the intercourse which they would have with them, partly through politeness, partly through necessity, might by degrees inspire persons to a false austere virtue, with those soft manners, those superfluous attentions, of which certain devout persons of the world do not always rid themselves.

He was still more on his guard against those who had a taste for the errors of the times. It was by his orders that Mother Angelique l'Huillier, superior of the first monastery of Paris, refused a considerable sum, which a lady, who thought of retiring there, offered to her house, provided she had permission of speaking occasionally with some jansenists at the grate. With the exception of these occasions, which required so much the more virtue as the saint always took upon himself all the odium of this apparently severe conduct, the ladies of the Visitation always found in him a most compassionate father. In his reprimands, he spoke to them with so much mildness, that he removed every thing bitter from the correction. According to the testimony given by them after his death, "he had an extraordinary deference and respect for all sorts of persons. His care to speak well of every body was equal to that which he always took to despise himself and publish every where that he was a great sinner. His charity redoubled towards the sick and afflicted; and he might with great truth say with St. Paul, that he made himself all to all to gain to Christ the strong and the weak. His forbearance with regard to the infirmities of the neighbor had

something prodigious; and although his presence inspired great respect, that respect opened the heart of those who had to speak with him. No person possessed more than he did, the talent of inspiring others with confidence; and the difficulty attached to the acknowledgment of the most humiliating weaknesses vanished in discovering them to him; he bore them with kindness, he excused them as a tender mother excuses those of her child."

One of the sisters whose capacity and talents were universally esteemed, after having remarked that to avoid repetition, she preferred being silent, rather than speaking again of admirable things of which the whole earth was witness, adds that she was often struck with the depth of his mind, and that she scarcely ever left him without a deep impression of the littleness of her own, which made known to her the immense disproportion between them. We shall hereafter see this judgment confirmed by that of an illustrious first president of the parliament of Paris.

It can easily be imagined that the ladies of the Visitation were much attached to their director. Yet they were, more than once, in danger of losing him; at length he found himself so enfeebled by age and labor, that he was no longer able to give them his services. Multiplied letters, pressing solicitations, the interference of many persons of rank, were all useless. But the archbishop of Paris having intreated him to continue towards those ladies so worthy of his care, the services which he had rendered them so happily, the saint, for whom the voice of the prelates of the church was always the voice of God, was forced to obey. But in order that his example might not serve as an authority, he made a rule by which all his missionaries are prohibited from directing, or even visiting, religious females.

It was then against the law established by that wise superior, that one of his most worthy successors* accepted, about the end of the last century, the direction of the royal house of Saint-Cyr. But that establishment was presented by hands

* Edme Joly, in 1692.

so respectable and so much respected throughout the world, that he could not well refuse it. Besides religious piety, the union of hearts, humility combined with elevated sentiments, the most attentive zeal for the education of the nobility, who are to carry the odor of innocence into every portion of the kingdom; all these virtues which make of the house of Saint-Cyr a model capable of exciting emulation in the most regular communities, demonstrate, that rules the most prudently established may have exceptions, which God himself authorises.

It was in the following year, 1642, that the congregation had at last a permanent establishment at Rome. Urban VIII entrusted those whom Vincent sent thither, with the care of giving missions, forming the aspirants to orders, and visiting the hospitals. The success was every where the same; and that rising colony produced others, which gave in Italy two considerable provinces to the children of Vincent of Paul.

God recompensed by these blessings, and many others, the charity of his servant, which was increasing every day; for it was at that time, that, to honor the humiliations of Him who took the form of the last of men, he began, on Christmas day, to cause two old men, sometimes filthy, to eat at his side. They were served before him, and before all his community. Vincent treated them with much respect; he never spoke to them with his head covered; his successors have followed his example; and of twelve poor men taken from the neighborhood, two eat, in turn, every day, at the side of the general, and remind him by their presence, that he must be the father of the poor, like the one whose place he holds.

The saint had believed that this act of charity would be the last he should perform in quality of superior. Although his congregation had as yet but ten establishments, including those of Rome, still he convoked a general assembly. It was opened on the 15th of October, 1642, and several regulations were then drawn up, worthy of the wisdom of those who composed it. Each one calculated on returning home with the consolation which affectionate children experience in having seen the best of fathers, when Vincent, who had hitherto

given no one cause of affliction, plunged them all into grief. This great servant of God, fully persuaded that there was no member in his community who was not better fitted to govern it than he, threw himself on his knees before his priests, and after having very humbly asked their pardon for the faults he had committed during his administration, he begged them, with a voice interrupted by sobs, to proceed to a new election for a superior. He then retired to afford them the liberty of a choice which he ratified in advance.

The deliberation soon terminated. Scarcely had they recovered from the surprise which such an unforeseen action caused, when they sent deputies to the holy priest to inform him that the assembly was very far from accepting his resignation, and they now conjured him to return and take his place. These deputies found him, at last, in a chapel, prostrate at the feet of the Son of God, where, with tears, he supplicated him to place at the head of his company, a man according to his own heart. In spite of every entreaty which they made use of, he protested that he was no longer superior, and he conjured those gentlemen to substitute another in his place.

On receiving this reply, those who composed the assembly went forth in a body, and entreated him to sacrifice his inclination to the wants of his children. The humble Vincent told them every thing he thought calculated to change their determination; they did the same thing on their part. As this contest, which had for its foundation the true virtue of both parties, was likely to continue, the assembly cried out, in concert: "You wish that we should choose a superior?" Vincent, who thought himself successful, renewed his entreaties. "Well!" they replied, "we elect yourself; and you may depend upon it, that so long as your life shall be preserved upon earth, we will have no other." The saint made still further efforts; but seeing, at last, that they succeeded no better than the first, he bowed his head and again took up the burthen which God laid upon his shoulders. He earnestly begged of the assembly the aid of their prayers, assuring them that it was the first act of obedience he required

of them The company promised never to forget him, when in the presence of God, and renewed, of their own accord, the promise of obedience which they had made to him.

His congregation, which for greater stability in doing good had just bound itself by a vow of perseverance, lost, a few months afterwards their powerful protector in the person of d'Armand Jean Duplessis, cardinal, duke of Richelieu.* That minister, who had so often made Europe tremble, at length reached that awful moment when neither the splendor of the Roman purple, nor treaties, nor all the refinements of policy could avail him. It has been remarked several times in the course of this history, that he had always a great esteem for the virtue of our holy priest and for his institute. He gave the spiritual care of the city which bears his name to the children of Vincent of Paul. He thought of placing twenty of his priests there, when he received the blow which carried him off. Not long before, he had given our saint one thousand crowns, to supply the necessaries of a number of ecclesiastics who had been educated in the seminary. He continued in the same sentiments until his death, and by a clause in his last will, he left considerable property to the house which he had established at Richelieu.

Louis XIII did not survive his minister six months. For nearly four years, this prince, who was engaged during almost all his reign with heresy on one side, and Austria on the other, saw death advancing towards him gradually. But he was threatened, in a manner not to be mistaken, about the month of April. A slow fever and a marked decay made him feel that his last hour was near at hand. After having taken every possible step to remove troubles inseparable from a long minority, he thought of nothing but the affairs of his conscience.

As courtiers are but very weak and imperfect resources at such a moment, this religious prince caused St. Vincent of Paul to be called to Saint Germain-en-Laye, where the dis-

* M. de Richelieu died on the 4th of December, aged fifty-three years. His life has been written several times, and last by M. le Clerc. But it is less a history than a condemnation of Richelieu and his minister.

ease had attacked him. The servant of God, to inspire him with confidence, and at the same time to disclose to him his danger of death, which human policy keeps as much as possible out of the sight and mind of the dying, said to him at once: "Sire, with him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end. *Timenti Dominum benè erit in extremis.*" This address did not surprise a king accustomed for a long time to store his mind with the most beautiful maxims of the Scripture: he answered by finishing the verse: "*et in die definitionis sue benedicetur.*"

Vincent passed, this first time, about eight days at court. He was often in private with his majesty, who found in him the words of salvation, and always listened to him with particular satisfaction. Two things appeared to occupy him most: the conversion of the Protestants, which had always been one of his principal objects, and the nomination to ecclesiastical dignities, which, during life, is esteemed an honor, but which sometimes costs very dear at the moment of death. It was on this occasion that he exclaimed: "Oh! Mr. Vincent, if God restored me to health, I would not appoint a person to the episcopacy who had not passed three years with you."

The saint, as well as all the court, admired the spirit of piety and resignation with which this great prince was filled. He beheld in his own body, nothing but a victim which was about to fall at the feet of the sovereign Master of kings; and it was to make himself worthy of acceptance, that, after being better for a very short interval, he sent new orders to Vincent to come to him. The saint scarcely ever lost sight of him during the last days of his life. He aided him frequently in raising his soul to God, in forming acts of contrition for his sins, of confidence in the mercy of the Lord, of submission to his holy will, and of all those virtues best calculated to prepare a soul for that last and awful moment upon which an eternity depends. If sometimes this prince looked upon death with dread, he soon afterwards considered it with the firmness of a truly Christian king; and when his physician told him that he had but very few moments to live: "Well, my God!"

he exclaimed without the least alteration, "I consent with all my heart." Some minutes afterwards, he expired in the arms of our saint.

Vincent, who saw that the queen was not to be comforted by men, endeavored to procure for her the consolations of religion. He went to Paris the same day, in order to have prayers offered for their majesties. Besides a solemn high mass, each priest of the mission offered the divine sacrifice for the soul of the late king. But in praying for Louis XIII, they did not forget the queen, who was entering upon a regency attended with troubles unexampled in our annals.

As Vincent of Paul, during the first years of the reign of Louis XIV, occupied an elevated station at court, one which he by no means sought for; as he had to share in the misfortunes of the new ministry; and as, in fine, his history is found connected with the principal events of that period, I cannot avoid giving a general idea of the conduct which Ann of Austria thought necessary to pursue, when she took the reins of government.

That princess, who had not escaped her share of suffering under the administration of Cardinal Richelieu, was at first disposed to remove all those who could be looked upon as the creatures of that minister. Julius Mazarini, who, since the siege of Casal, where he succeeded in arresting and charming, as it were, two armies about to engage in battle, had found means to insinuate himself into the good graces of Richelieu, looked upon himself as one of the first to be sacrificed. Mr. de Beringhen and Vincent of Paul prevented it, each in his own way: Beringhen by telling the queen that she could not do without Mazarin who was acquainted thoroughly with the state of affairs; and Vincent by the general principle of pardoning our enemies. The cardinal was therefore retained in his post: and that skilful, subtle, witty, and industrious man, made himself so necessary that he obtained no less authority under Louis XIV, than Richelieu had possessed under Louis XIII.

To this first step, the regent added another which mortified our saint very much. Ann of Austria, who was truly zeal-

ous and full of piety, formed a council, in which religious affairs were to be examined, as well as the good and bad qualities of those who had any pretensions to the dignities of the church. Mazarin, chancellor Séguier, Charton, the grand penitentiary of Paris, and Vincent of Paul formed this council. A favorite of that princess* says that Vincent was the president.

This dignity which procured for him the empty homage of a crowd of persons who were panting for the good things of the sanctuary, filled his soul with horror and confusion. He made every effort to get rid of this office; but the queen knew his capacity and rare virtue too well to give her consent. He had recourse to God, when he found that he could not succeed with men. Divine Providence thus disposing of him so as to present him a spectacle both for men and angels, did not listen to his prayers. It was, in fact, during more than ten successive years, in which he held this elevated station, that his virtue appeared in all its splendor. His humility triumphed over the fickle applause of the world; his equanimity and patience were never exhausted amidst the shafts of envy, malice, and injustice which were hurled against him. His firmness in upholding the interests of God and of the church was superior to all the assaults of human respect. It was upon this great theatre that his inviolable fidelity in the service due to the king, his profound respect for the bishops, his love for all orders of the church, his tender charity for all religious and secular communities shone forth with new splendor. His own congregation was the only one which he forgot, although he had every opportunity to ask and obtain favors, as the queen entertained the greatest consideration for him; Cardinal Mazarin loved him ever since the life time of Richelieu, and thus he might have asked and obtained many favors, which would have been considered as of much consequence; still he never for a moment thought of asking the least favor, either for himself or for his friends.

From the beginning, he felt that, determined as he was to give his support only to true merit, he was going to raise a

* Madame de Motteville

crowd of powerful enemies. But he would have counted all that as nothing, if he could have removed from the sanctuary those who were only called to it by interest, cupidity, and ambition. The misfortune was, and this thought filled his soul with sorrow, that he could not reasonably hope to succeed. Cardinal Mazarin who was now raised to the summit of power, for before the end of the year 1643 he was appointed prime minister, appeared to be influenced by maxims diametrically opposed to those of Vincent of Paul. Mazarin considered all those as the friends of God who were his own friends. Vincent judged of the tree by its fruit. He was guided in judging of the true qualifications required in a bishop by those which, in accordance with the apostle of the Gentiles, are prescribed by the sacred canons; and although he did not doubt that a man of rank might, when possessed of virtue, be more useful to the church than another of humble station, still he was far from being persuaded that a man had all the necessary qualifications to govern the flock of Jesus Christ, merely because he was the son or the relative of some one, who had been distinguished for taking cities and gaining battles.

It was with this germ of opposition that these two men entered the ecclesiastical council. Vincent went thither in the same simple dress and manner, as when he went to instruct the poor country people. He did not transgress the bounds of decency, and much less those of simplicity. Distinctions gave him more pain than they afford pleasure to the martyrs of ambition. The prince of Condé wishing, at the commencement of these favors, to make him sit near him: "Your highness," he replied, "does me too much honor in admitting me to your presence; are you not aware that I am the son of a poor countryman." "Good manners and a good life," answered this great prince, "constitute a true nobleman." He added that his merit was known and appreciated long before the present day. Yet, in order that he might have an opportunity to form a more correct judgment of it, he caused the conversation to turn upon some controverted points of canon law. Vincent of Paul treated them with so much

clearness and precision, that the prince gave him a kind of reprimand for the very contemptuous manner in which he had spoken of himself; and afterwards going into the queen's apartment, he congratulated her on the choice she had made of a man so well calculated to assist her in carrying into effect her good designs.

In the first councils at which the holy man assisted, he presented a plan of reform with regard to pensions, co-adjutorships, the age necessary for every sort of benefice, and those which had fallen into lapse, the abuse of which was carried as far as it could go. If this plan had been followed in all the other articles, as it was in the last, with which our saint alone was charged, there is every reason to believe that all the orders of the Gallican church would have gradually recovered their ancient splendor. It is at least sure, as the illustrious Fénélon said in his letter to Clement XI, that there would not have been seen in the episcopacy some subjects who were not very edifying. But it was difficult for things to remain long on so good a footing. The queen, who was too diffident of her own strength, soon believed that Mazarin was necessary to her; and the cardinal easily penetrated the dispositions of the princess. Hence the council of conscience subsisted in its integrity, only during the time that this minister thought necessary to strengthen his new-born authority; and that he might not find in Vincent of Paul a rigid censor, who might disapprove of his choice, he endeavored to make himself master of the principal nominations.

There was one in which our saint did himself eternal honor. The court being out of Paris, Cardinal Mazarin wrote to Vincent, that the queen, to acknowledge in the son the services of the father, had just named Mr. — to a bishopric which had become vacant a few days before; and that her majesty desired him to give the necessary instructions to that ecclesiastic. This letter embarrassed the holy priest very much. On one side, he had great respect for the orders of the queen and her first minister; on the other he knew that the ecclesiastic in question was not capable of filling a see which had been long neglected, and required an edifying, zealous, and resident

pastor. As every way on the side of the court was closed, the brief of nomination having been expedited, and a revision of course precluded, Vincent adopted a plan, the idea of which could only originate with a saint devoured with zeal for the house of God. He went to the father of the clergyman, and without fearing to lose an old friend, he ventured to represent to him the eminent virtues required for the episcopacy, and how much his son was destitute of them; but from these principles, already so alarming in themselves, he drew a still more alarming consequence, viz., that the father was obliged to send back to the court the nomination he had received for his son, if he would not expose both himself and his son, and perhaps his whole family, to the indignation of Him who curses the pastors whom he has not chosen.

A compliment so different from those which this gentleman had begun to receive on the new dignity of his son, must have astonished him. Yet, as he was possessed of a fund of religion, and could not doubt that a remonstrance, so painful to nature, was the effect of the purest charity, he listened to the saint with attention. He even went so far as to thank him for his good advice, and promised to think very seriously of it. His pretended reflections resulted in nothing. But God soon spoke in a stronger voice than his servant had done; and death, which carried off the new prelate a short time after his consecration, left the father nothing but the deepest regret of having preferred in vain his own interest to the interest of God.

The zeal which the holy priest displayed to keep back from the sanctuary those who were not worthy to be admitted to it, or who would force an entrance by the arms of simony, exposed him to the blackest calumny. Efforts were made to destroy him in the mind of the queen, of the minister, and of all good people in the kingdom. One of those men, who are capable of any thing, dared to report through Paris, and even to a person of the first distinction, that he, who was apparently so great an enemy to simony, accommodated himself perfectly to it in practice; and that a short time before, he had, for a library and a sum of money, procured a benefice for an

ambitious man. This report was, at first, circulated covertly and with all the precautions which accompany imposture; by degrees it became public enough. One of the friends of Vincent informed him of it. However accustomed the holy priest was to suffer, such an atrocious imputation moved him a little; and on the first impulse he commenced a letter in his justification. But he had scarcely written two lines, when he reproached himself with his sensibility, and animated by the spirit of St. Francis of Sales, who found himself dishonored in a much more infamous manner, he said to himself: "Miserable wretch! what were you going to do? What! you want to justify yourself, and you have just heard that a Christian, falsely accused at Tunis, passed three days in torments, and died at last without a word of complaint! . . . and you wish to excuse yourself! No, it shall not be so." At these words, he threw down the pen, and suffered the public to think freely whatever they pleased. God took his vindication upon himself. Those who had been tempted to suspect his virtue, soon abandoned their unjust prejudices; and the speedy death of the one who had outraged him so unworthily, was looked upon by many as a chastisement from that watchful hand, which, to discredit calumny, often strikes the calumniator.

In fact, the injustice was so much the more crying, as the disinterestedness of the holy priest was generally known. Without referring to his immense alms, which so often exhausted his purse, he proved, even at the time of which we speak, that, so far from abusing the credit which he had at court, to procure what did not belong to him, he would not even have entered, at that price, upon the possession of what was his own.

One of the principal magistrates of the kingdom, a man who was powerful and esteemed, gave himself a great deal of trouble to procure an abbey for his son, who was not worthy of it. Justly fearing that he would be opposed by Vincent of Paul, he made an effort to gain him over; and to obtain his object, he let him know that if he would not oppose his views, the house of St. Lazarus would be put in possession of rights and property which had been alienated

from it. The reply of the saint was brief, and comprised in these few words : “ I will never do any thing against God or my conscience for all the possessions of earth. The company will never perish through poverty : I rather fear that it will perish when it ceases to be poor.” If these words be prophetic, the congregation is still at a distance from its destruction.

Notwithstanding the contradictions which the holy man met with, he did not exert himself less to be as useful as he could to all orders of the church. The bishops, whom he always honored so much as to throw himself at their feet when he appeared before them, found in him a respectful and zealous protector at court. He was never tired of recommending them to the queen, the cardinal minister, and to such of the magistrates as had the greatest authority. It was he who, by causing Mr. Cupif to be appointed bishop of Dol, terminated a long and unpleasant dispute which he had with Mr. de Rieux, bishop of Léon. It was he also, who, to establish and consolidate the true faith in a city which had long been the bulwark of heresy, caused the bishopric of Maillezais to be transferred to La Rochelle. It was he who, in several interviews with President Molé, endeavored to prevent appeals from producing, by the intrigues of bad priests, an effect at variance with the object for which they had been established. It was he who ventured to represent to virtuous bishops, that mildness, patience, even humiliation, were their proper arms ; and that these should be exhausted, before recourse was had to excommunication. It was he who, that there might be in the episcopacy no one self-intruded, brought to a holy and perfect indifference, sometimes, an almoner of the king who grew weary of being forgotten ; at other times, a religious who, seduced by an appearance of good, thought that a bishopric *in partibus* would enable him to continue the services he rendered to the church. In fine, it was he who, holding a secret council with the queen, after she had perceived that her minister was not scrupulous enough, gave so many good bishops to the church, that the celebrated Flechier did not doubt that the clergy of France owed to him their splendor and glory.

The services he rendered to the religious communities were no less important. His first historian assures us, and he has reason to do so, that of all those in France, there is not one which does not owe him much, either for the whole body, or for some of its members. Jean de Montenas, abbot of St. Genevieve, and the regular canons of his congregation acknowledge with pleasure in their letter to Clement XI, that Cardinal de la Rochefoucault, being commissioned by the holy see to reform them, found, in the execution of that important project, great assistance in the credit and counsels of Vincent of Paul. Henry de Briquerville de la Lucerne, after having written that Alain de Solminihac, one of his most worthy predecessors, never did any thing of consequence without having consulted the holy priest, adds that it was the latter who aided that virtuous prelate to re-establish the ancient discipline in the monasteries of the diocese of Cahors, and who sustained him at Rome and in France in the reformation of the order of Chancelade, of which he was abbot and first superior. Henry de la Marche, abbot of Grand-Mont, confesses that Vincent rendered to all his community services which could not be forgotten without ingratitude. The abbot of Bonfay and Rangeval, of the order of Prémontré, acknowledge in concert, that the re-establishment of discipline, which they desired to introduce into some of their houses, was so violently thwarted by enemies, that if the holy priest had not employed in their favor all his credit with the king, there is every probability that the excellent work could not have succeeded. He supported with the same ardor the reforms which took place in the orders of St. Anthony and St. Benedict. I shall say also that he was the particular friend of Dom Grégoire Tarisse, first superior general of the congregation of Saint-Maur; and that this perfect religious always honored him as a model of piety and virtue.

What Vincent did amongst religious communities of men, he did with still greater ardor to re-establish and preserve exact discipline in the monasteries of females, who stand in greater need of being supported against their own weakness. He always endeavored to procure for them abbesses

and superiors who owed their vocation neither to flesh, nor blood, but to the will of God alone.

When the abbeyes had the right of election, he vigorously opposed the intrigues of certain nuns, who, having no hope of obtaining the first place by that means, endeavored to reach it by the influence of their relations and the authority of the king. He acted in the same way with regard to those who, being elected for three years according to the custom of their community, solicited briefs of continuation, being persuaded that young females, who are naturally less firm in good, may forget themselves more easily in great charges, when they are to be continued in them for life. Whenever there was a vacancy in the abbeyes of which the king had the nomination, he was inflexible in placing in them only ladies of known capacity and constant regularity. He removed from the government of a monastery, a niece whose aunt had made it a pleasure house for her family, where she was sumptuously entertained at the expense of what was necessary for the religious. It is true that on that occasion he underwent a deluge of insulting words, and more insulting threats: but instead of complaining to the queen, who would have avenged him in a striking manner, he loaded the one who had treated him so badly with politeness, and redoubled his prayers for her.

He never admitted coadjutorships, which were only founded upon human tenderness, and by means of which a religious possessed of little virtue and zeal, often succeeded another who had very little more. In resignations, he paid much less attention to the certificates, often obtained by solicitation, of capacity and piety, than to the information which he secretly obtained concerning the merit and virtue of the persons, in whose favor the resignation took place.

One of his principal cares was to banish all troubles and divisions from the monasteries of females, those fatal flames which, as an apostle says, often spring from a small spark. He re-established tranquillity and discipline in the abbey of Estival, by sending thither, under the order of the queen, four religious of Val-de-Grace. He did the same thing in the abbey of La Perrine, by means of Mother Louise Eugénie de

Fontaine, who, with the meekness and unction of St. Francis of Sales, restored peace and harmony in it.

But nothing appeared more essential to him than to remove from the cloister every thing that bore the impress of novelty. Before there were any question about jansenism, he stifled an error somewhat resembling that of the fanatics, who, at the end of the preceding century, had made so much noise in Spain. Some fanatics had found out new means of salvation, which antiquity never knew, and by which they flattered themselves with reaching the most sublime perfection. In their opinion St. Paul himself had never walked in the great roads which exalt and edify the soul. St. Paul had not penetrated the mysteries of devotion and spirituality. They alone had been chosen by God to give lessons upon this matter, and even to reform the church. These enthusiasts, whom Louis XIII thought had been dispersed, took advantage, particularly in the diocesses of Paris and Bazas, of the commotions which disturbed the minority of Louis XIV. The monasteries of nuns, as usual, were the first conquests these innovators attempted. They thus surprised a good number of persons of every sex and condition. Happily the evil had not yet struck very deep roots when the servant of God was informed of it. He sent to the infected communities learned and virtuous persons who showed the danger of these false maxims. They also watched so closely and claimed so powerfully those who were suspected of dogmatising, that they hastened to return to their primitive obscurity.

As it is impossible to enter into a detail of the other services which Vincent of Paul rendered to the church and to the state during the regency of Ann of Austria, we shall only remark that he undertook every kind of good work of which an active and watchful zeal is capable. It was he who, to exterminate blasphemy and to abolish the horrid practice of duelling, promoted the publication of those excellent edicts, by which Louis XIV commenced his reign. It was he who caused measures to be taken against that licentiousness, in which men void of faith and virtue indulged, by publishing and spreading about dangerous or rather nefarious works,

which the demon of libertinism and impiety alone could suggest. It was he who, being unable to abolish comedies, caused at least those indecent scenes, which render plays doubly dangerous, to be suppressed. In fine it was he who, knowing that the prisoners of state confined in the Bastille had no one to teach them how sanctify their sufferings, induced the queen to appoint a fervent ecclesiastic of his conference to give them pious exhortations; and by disposing them to be reconciled with God, to dispose them also for the favor of the king.

That which was most admirable in the ministry of St. Vincent, was his exercising it at all times with a nobleness, a disinterestedness, a wisdom of which few examples are found. His houses were almost all poor enough, and most of them very much burdened by the law they had prescribed to themselves to labor gratuitously in their principal functions. As he had been commissioned to distribute a great number of benefices, he would easily have found the means of uniting some of them to his congregation: of this he would never think. More than once persons attempted to corrupt his virtue by the allurements of money, which is generally so powerful. Without repeating the story of that magistrate who desired in a manner to purchase his silence, one of his most intimate friends offered him ten thousand francs, to induce him to cause some propositions in which there was nothing injurious to the people, to be proposed and admitted in the counsel of the king. But besides that the holy priest did not think that he could sell the credit which he had at court, he observed to his friends that the system to which he was solicited to lend his aid, might injure the interests of the clergy; so that raising his eyes to heaven, he made no other answer than this: "God preserve me from it: I would rather die than say a single word on the subject." Far from profiting in his own favor by the power which his employment gave him at the court and in all the kingdom, he always exerted himself to cause the favors which the queen intended for him, to fall upon others. She had so marked a respect for him, that, by the acknowledgment of all the courtiers, there was nothing that he

might not look for from the good will of that princess. It was even said, and the report was spread abroad, that she wished to ask the honor of the Roman purple for him. But the manner in which he received those of his friends, who hastened to congratulate him about it, dispensed others with paying him the same compliment. A man so perfectly dead to himself, was still more so to all earthly grandeur. To live and not to be humbled, was a martyrdom for him.

To perfect disinterestedness, the saint added consummate prudence and wisdom. Born an enemy to precipitation, which, in the opinion of Titus Livius, engages men in the most erroneous steps, he never decided on any thing without having reflected on it maturely: he attentively weighed all the reasons for and against, he examined the circumstances, he foresaw the consequences. But when he had once made up his mind, he was as prompt in the execution of his plans, as he had been circumspect in the examination; and then, whether it succeeded or not, he remained in peace; being well assured, with an ancient father, that wisdom does not judge of things by their success, and that God sometimes inspires designs of which he wishes us to make a sacrifice to him.

With regard to secrecy, the neglect of which destroys every day the best concerted projects, Vincent was invulnerable. When he returned from court, he was so strict in the observance of silence with regard to state affairs, that one would have thought he was returning from the cell of a carthusian. But it was not so much the nature of the important affairs transacted in the cabinet of kings, as his own virtue that made him so circumspect. A man who had been for a long time inviolably faithful to the great number of persons who came from every direction to lay themselves open to him, was very far from revealing secrets, which, according to the advice of the Holy Ghost, should be concealed in the heart, never to escape thence.

We cannot too often repeat that all these great qualities of the holy priest, arose from one principle, his attachment to the rules of the gospel. It was from that source that he drew all his light; and, notwithstanding the prejudices of human

policy, we must acknowledge that it is there alone that we can learn how to reconcile what was then seen in our saint; a favorable access to the sovereign, and a perfect disengagement from all wordly interests; great activity in external affairs and a most intimate union with God; opportunities, as easy as frequent, of making friends at the expense of good rules, and an uprightness of heart which nothing could alter; a continual intercourse with all kinds of persons, good or evil intentioned, and an equanimity of mind always constant, always uniform: in fine, an understanding capable of answering all that his prince could desire, and a heart as deeply penetrated with his own nothingness, as it was full of piety and love for God.

It was to spread abroad this divine love more and more, that he sent, this very year 1643, many of his priests into different cities of the kingdom. Three of them began to form the seminary of Cahors under the auspices of Mr. de Solminihac. Others spread themselves through different diocesses, to give missions. The most important was made at Marseilles on the first seven galleys. The duchess of Aiguillon, who had solicited it, was so moved by the account which the pious bishop, Jean Baptiste Gault, gave her of it, that, in order to perpetuate the good work, she established four missionaries in that city.

To this establishment was added that of Sedan. The Duke of Bouillon, who had entered into the conspiracy of Cinq-Mars, had no sooner restored that place to Louis XIII, than this religious monarch caused missions to be made there, to strengthen the Catholics whom a constant intercourse with the self-styled reformed had exposed to the danger of losing their faith. After the death of that prince, Vincent, at the solicitation of the queen, sent six priests there, who were placed in possession of the parish by Eléonor d'Estampes, archbishop of Reims. Their chief "was Mr. Gallet, a learned man, of acknowledged probity, disinterested, religious without superstition, extremely careful to say and do nothing which might bring upon himself exterior distinction, always a model and never a spectacle in the missions. He began the

great work of the conversion of the people of Sedan by studying their character, in order to accustom himself to their ways, and accommodate himself in some measure to their dispositions." This is the account of him given by Marshal Fabert to our saint, in his very words. He added that the method of the priests of the mission and their ability gained many Calvinists to the church, and nothing is more certain. When these gentlemen arrived at Sedan, there were but fifteen hundred Catholics. The face of things altered by degrees through their care, and that of other communities which were established there at the solicitation of the servant of God. Of more than ten thousand inhabitants that are in that city, not one-third persevere now in heresy; and that not in consequence surely of the talents by which they are upheld in it.

It was also in this year, 1644, that François Mallier, bishop of Troyes, established the missionaries in the little city of Montmirel, at the invitation of Pierre de Gondi, Duke of Retz. The inhabitants of the place and neighborhood saw with pleasure the children of our saint in a country, where they had so often admired his own virtue and apostolical zeal. Time which effaces every thing, has not yet diminished their first sentiments of respect and veneration. Fathers have transmitted them to their children; and the striking miracle which God worked there some years ago through the intercession of his servant, is a proof that if Montmirel continues to pay a just homage to the memory of the saint, the saint continues to cherish and protect Montmirel.

If Vincent felt great satisfaction in seeing that his priests were in a situation to be useful to the church in a number of diocesses, he felt more so on finding that they multiplied without losing any thing of their primitive spirit. "Never," says he in one of his letters, "have more regularity, more union and cordiality prevailed than at present. But, adds he, a great calm is always the forerunner of some storm."

His prognostic was found correct, and the congregation saw itself on the point of experiencing in the death of its holy institutor, the greatest loss it could sustain. His

domestic and exterior occupations; the great pain he felt in being placed in the royal council; the continual embarrassment caused him by this employment which was always a martyrdom for him; the want of rest for a man advanced in age, and who rising exactly at four o'clock every morning, went sometimes to bed at midnight; so much fatigue exhausted nature at last. His sickness caused alarm at the commencement. The holy priest, to dispose himself for death which he believed to be near, received communion every day. The love of God engrossed his whole heart; and in a delirium which lasted for some time, they remarked nothing in him, as formerly in St. Francis Xavier, except emotions full of ardor, tender sighs for heaven, inflamed desires of soon seeing the dissolution of this house of clay, which impedes the union of the soul with its adorable principle.

The news of his illness being circulated, all his friends, and particularly Father J. B. de Saint-Jure, were much alarmed at it; but no one felt it more deeply than a young priest who was then sick himself. As soon as he heard that the respectable superior was in danger of death, he begged God to accept his life in exchange for that of a man, who was more than ever necessary to the church, the state, and his own congregation. Vincent began from that time to grow better, and the priest to sink so visibly that he died a short time afterwards. The saint recited the office of the dead for him with one of his clergy, before any one had apprized him of his death. This is not the only time that he was acquainted with things, which he could know only by a light from above. "He predicted to me," said a celebrated advocate in the parliament of Paris (Mr. Husson), secret and hidden things which did not happen until two years afterwards, and which he could not then foresee but by a particular illustration, or rather by a spirit of prophecy."

As soon as the holy priest was a little recovered, he recommenced his exercises and labors with as much fervor and assiduity, as if they had not brought him to death's door. After having performed the obsequies of the virtuous Cardinal de la Rochefoucault, who, like Louis XIII, died in his

arms,* he went to Richelieu, where he was occupied from morning till night. By order of the queen, he commenced a mission at Fontainebleau. He sent new colonies to Saintes and Mans. He was even on the point of sending one to Babylon, when the death of Urban VIII, who had directed him to do it, defeated his design. He formed one which was more successful, to procure for the slaves of Barbary that aid which was wanting to him in the time of his captivity. Julien Guerin, born in the diocess of Bayeux, a man who, before his association with Vincent of Paul, had known how to sanctify himself in the profession of arms, was the person to whom he gave the department of Tunis.

It would have been difficult to make a better choice. Mr. Guerin united to an unction calculated to soften the most hardened heart, a zeal which might be compared to that of the greatest apostles. The bishop of Saintes, in whose diocess he had labored, openly declared that he knew no person in the world, in whom the divine operation was more manifest, and who had a greater grace for exhibiting to advantage the truths of the gospel. Although it is said of him, as of the holy Precursor, that he lived without eating or drinking, he labored so continually and with so much ardor, that it required a kind of miracle to preserve his life. He had always desired to die amongst the captives and barbarians. The idea alone that he should have it in his power to be so happy as to endure for one day what the martyrs suffered, transported him with joy. Some one having told him on the eve of his departure, that "he was going to get himself hanged in Barbary:" "this is too little," replied he in a transport of love for Jesus Christ, "I earnestly hope that God will grant me the favor to be impaled or to suffer something worse."

He persevered in these heroic sentiments at Tunis: the apostolical man produced by his invincible patience prodigious fruits, of which we shall speak elsewhere. If God did not grant him the crown of martyrdom, he honored him

* Francis de la Rochefoucault, who was constantly employed with much zeal in the reformation of the orders of St. Benedict and St. Augustine, died on the 14th of February, 1645, at the age of 87.

at least with that which is due to the most eminent charity. He had not been yet four years in Barbary, when, on account of his assiduous intercourse with the slaves afflicted with the plague, he was attacked himself, and terminated a holy life by a death precious in the sight of the Lord. Happily for the Christians of Africa, he had, the preceding year, obtained permission from the Bey, to bring another priest from France to aid him in reaping a harvest which was too abundant for one man: and Vincent who thought nothing too much when the relief of the poor was in question, had directly sent him Jean le Vacher, a priest of the diocess of Paris. It is this incomparable man who, after having labored more than thirty-three years for the salvation of the slaves, and even of the Turks of Algiers and Tunis, had finally the happiness to be the first of the children of Vincent of Paul, to shed his blood for the faith of Jesus Christ in that infidel and barbarous country.

The servant of God did not neglect in France those duties of charity, which his priests so generously performed in foreign lands. He gave, that very year, all possible help to a great number of sacred ministers, whom the persecution of the pitiless Cromwell had obliged to leave their country. He procured support and lodging, at little expense, for a crowd of priests, who degraded themselves by the indecent manner in which they sought alms, and by a necessary consequence degraded the priesthood of the Son of God. He boldly defended his old friend Mr. Olier, and after having sustained him in a popular commotion, in which that worthy pastor came near being burned alive in his own house, he bore, on his own account, at court, reproaches which neither of them had merited.

But there are few things which caused him more pains than the establishment of his priests in the diocess of Saint-Malo. Achilles de Harlai de Sancy, who was bishop of it, had obtained some of them by earnest entreaty, and put in the monastery of Saint Meen, of which he was superior and abbot. They had scarcely occupied it, when a decree of the parliament of Brittany obliged them to leave it. Vincent,

who had written some months before to one of his priests, "that it was much better to lose than to go to law," wanted immediately to withdraw his missionaries, of whom he had need elsewhere. But the bishop strongly opposed it. He represented to him that he had done nothing but in consequence of the letters patent of the king, that there were only two aged monks in that house, whose consent he had obtained, and that they were neither reformed nor willing to be so; that the abbey which had been constantly subject to the jurisdiction of his predecessors and of himself belonged to no congregation; and that being independent of every other body, it had never received any visits, except from the bishop. Vincent permitted his priests to remain with him, with order to obey him; but he took great care not to enter into their suit, nor did he ever engage in it, either personally or by any of those connected with him. It would be useless and disagreeable to repeat that the bishop of Saint Malo had recourse to censures; that the parliament of Rennes opposed new decrees to them; that these were annulled by the council of state of the king; that it was necessary to obtain a new bull from the Holy See; and that in the informations which preceded its publication, the clergy, nobility, even the judges of the neighborhood, rendered to the children of Vincent of Paul, who by their zeal and labors had already sanctified four diocesses, the most glorious testimony they could receive. But it will not be useless to add that if the affair of Saint Meen caused a passing difference in the minds of those concerned, it did not alter that charity which ought to unite hearts; that at the very time of the crisis, Vincent employed, as he had hitherto done, all his credit in favor of the reform; that Dom Grégoire Tарisse loudly proclaimed the merits of the holy priest; that it was in some measure to follow his views, that his pious and learned congregation was one of the first to ask of the holy See to render justice to his virtues, and that, some time after, the children of St. Benedict consecrated the memory of his virtues in a monument which virtue alone can erect to virtue.

But the servant of God erected for himself more durable ones than those made of marble and bronze. As each year

of his life furnished a great number of events precious in the eyes of religion, we can do no more than merely point them out. It was at this very time that, having heard that one of his benefactors had lost his fortune, he wished to return what he had received from him, as he had already done to the curate of Vernon. It was also at the same time that several ladies of rank having offered him sixty thousand livres to build a church, he constantly refused the gift and begged them to distribute the sum amongst the poor, who were beginning to suffer. In fine, it was at this time that, in spite of the enormous expense which it would have been necessary to incur, he was on the point of sending some of his priests to Salé and to Persia, and that, as he often repeated, with a view to indemnify the church for the losses which it had sustained within two centuries, and those which the growing irreligion of the day made him consider as inevitable.

But he soon undertook in Ireland what he could not effect in the East. Innocent X having made known to him that the Catholics of that kingdom, almost destitute of pastors, lived in profound and dangerous ignorance of the truths of faith, Vincent chose in his congregation eight laborers capable of making every effort for the sanctification of their brethren. Five of these virtuous priests having been brought up in the islands of Great Britain, were perfectly acquainted with their manners and language: the others, with a little labor, could make themselves understood by the people. All, before their departure, threw themselves at the feet of the saint, and asked his blessing. Vincent prayed the God of mercy to be pleased to bless them himself. "Be united," said he to them, "and the Lord will bless you. But be united by the charity of Jesus Christ. Every union which is not cemented by the blood of this divine Saviour, cannot subsist. God calls you to labor in his vineyard, go to it; but go to it, as having but one heart and one intention in him, and by this means you will bring forth fruit."

He afterwards directed them, how to act during the voyage, and when they should have arrived at the place of their destination. He did it with so much prudence, that on their re-

turn they acknowledged that the salutary counsels of that judicious superior had been for them a source of benediction. France, which they were about to leave, gathered the first fruits of their zeal. During the stay which they were obliged to make at Nantz, they instructed the poor, served and consoled the sick in the hospitals. They learned in the spiritual conferences which they had with the ladies of charity of the parishes, the manner of visiting and assisting the sick in that spirit of compassion and tenderness, of which a God-Man has left us the example.

At Saint-Nazaire, whilst waiting for the day of their departure, they gave a kind of mission to all the passengers who wished to profit by it. An English gentleman who had the curiosity to listen to them, could not resist the Holy Ghost who spoke by their mouth. His eyes were opened : he returned to the church, from which his fathers had so unhappily separated. It was very evident that God had designs of salvation with regard to him. Three days afterwards, I know not by what accident, he was mortally wounded. It was then that he felt all the value of the grace which God had just granted him. His mouth could not sufficiently express his gratitude. He made all shed tears who were witnesses of those which he poured forth for his former errors.

Our missionaries at length departed ; and, before arriving at Limerick, they experienced such violent tempests and dangers that they were more than once snatched, as if by miracle, from the very jaws of death. We shall speak elsewhere of the great but arduous victories which they gained over the enemy of salvation.

Whilst they were so usefully occupied in Ireland, an occasion presented itself to the holy priest, to be associated in France in a portion of their labors. Ann of Austria having taken the king into Picardy to revive the spirit of his troops, who had been intimidated by various defeats, Vincent of Paul profited by the absence of their majesties to resume his apostolical labors in the country. He gave a mission at Moni, in the diocess of Beauvais ; and at the entreaty of the princess of Conti, he there established the confraternity of

charity, which is still considered one of the most flourishing in the kingdom. Great as was his inclination for this kind of employment, he could not continue it long. So many people stood in need of him in Paris, that his absence was soon felt.

His counsels and protection were at that time much required by the community of the daughters of Providence, of which he was superior. It was only four years since it had been established by Marie de Lumague, the widow of François Pollalion, counsellor of the king and his agent at Ragusa. That pious lady, brought up a long time in the school of the saint, had there learned to practise the most solid virtues of christianity, and particularly confidence in God and zeal for the sanctification of souls. It was with these happy dispositions that, although she had scarcely any funds save those of Providence, she undertook to afford an asylum to young persons of her own sex, for whom beauty, want, and the bad example of their parents might be, and too often are, the occasions of their loss before God and man. François de Gondy, archbishop of Paris, wished to know what our saint thought of this establishment, before approving it. By his order, Vincent paid two regular visits to it; and out of thirty young women who then composed it, he chose seven who appeared to him best calculated to serve as a foundation to the whole edifice. He gave them counsels worthy of them and worthy of himself. He transferred to their hearts a portion of the fire which consumed him; and there is every reason to believe that it was he who, four years afterwards, in 1651, obtained for them, from Ann of Austria, the hospital *de la Santé*, which is still the place of their residence. That virtuous queen entertained great hopes from this new foundation, and the event justified them. The house of Providence has always been edifying. The spirit of Vincent of Paul, who was the first superior, has been perpetuated in it. They make it an honor and a duty to imitate his virtues, and although gratitude is not the virtue of the age, they there acknowledge with pleasure, that the daughters of Providence do not owe less to the holy priest, than to the pious lady who instituted them.

In order to recur less frequently to communities of this nature, which had a greater share in the prayers and services of the man of God, we shall here speak of two or three others, which are under a special obligation to him; but we shall do so without paying much attention to the order of time.

Besides that of the Christian Union, and the Propagation of the Faith, which he united in one body, he evinced the liveliest interest for the house of the orphans, established by *Mademoiselle de l'Etang*. He aided it in its greatest need. He directed the foundress to select from the community, which was then composed of two hundred young women, three or four of the most intelligent, to share with her the burden of affairs, and above all to consider the desire of doing every thing herself as a temptation.

Vincent had also a share in the foundation of the daughters of *St. Genevieve*. Three young ladies, who had a desire to live in community, and associate to themselves those persons of their sex, who might be animated with the same feelings, believed it necessary, to avoid taking a false step, to do nothing without having consulted the servant of God. He, after many prayers, told them, in a tone of certainty, that God desired to make use of them to give a new company to his church; that it would be for the glory of our Lord, and very useful to the public. Time has proved that God spoke by the mouth of his minister. These young ladies, who were afterwards united to those of *Madame de Miramion*, have been earnestly engaged with them in advancing in virtue. In such a pursuit there is nothing but gain.

But there are few establishments which owe more to our saint, than that of the daughters of the cross. The insolence of a teacher, who had dared to attempt the honor of one of his scholars, showed that young females are never secure but in the hands of persons of their own sex; and a proposal was made to unite some females who would have virtue and courage sufficient to undertake that good work. Four presented themselves at *Roie*, in *Picardy*, where the scandal had taken place. But the war and their own affairs having obliged them to retire to *Paris*, *Marie l'Huillier de Villeneuve*

received them kindly, and made a trial of their talents. Vincent, whom she did not fail to consult, encouraged her, and showed her how to instruct young women in such a manner that they might be able to form others afterwards. The archbishop of Paris approved their constitutions, and they took the name of Daughters of the Cross, on account of the contradictions they had already experienced.

But what they had suffered was only a prelude to the trials reserved for their virtue. Madame de Villeneuve, whose long infirmities had not permitted her to establish them sufficiently, was taken from them on the 13th of January, 1650. This occurred at a very unfortunate moment; and the persons who had heretofore taken the greatest interest in them, were of opinion that they should be suppressed, or at least united to some other community. Vincent of Paul, who was commonly rather slow in his determinations, and who, in such matters, did not resist the multitude, contended, however, that every means should be used to insure the subsistence of this holy establishment. "It is the work of God," said he to Mr. Abelly; "it must not be destroyed; that community is composed now of only five females; but their number will multiply. The stream is small, but it will receive water to make it abundant."

These words, and the circumstances in which Vincent pronounced them being taken into consideration, appeared so improbable, that it could hardly be believed that the event would correspond to them. It was not long, however, before they were verified. The saint, who, by upholding this new establishment against every body, found himself more charged with it than any one else, engaged Madame de Traversai to take part in the good work. The holy widow gave herself up entirely to it. She surmounted by her patience, her credit, and the aid of the man of God, the obstacles which she met at every step. By degrees it was perceived that this tree, too long battered by the winds, would produce fruits of justice and salvation. The Daughters of the Cross contribute still daily to the sanctification of a great number of souls, and

they enter with zeal upon those apostolical functions which the law of God has not interdicted to their sex.

Before finishing with this matter, I may be permitted to make two reflections concerning it. The first, which is furnished me by one of the sisters of the Cross, that the saint, in sustaining them, in some measure wronged the Sisters of Charity, since he might have obtained for them the advantages which he procured for the others. The second, which does great honor to the foundations of which we have spoken, is, that in general, Vincent was on his guard against new establishments. This appears by a long letter which he wrote that very year to the archbishop of Paris, and in which, after having acknowledged that it was himself who, in the council of the king, had prevented a religious female under the protection of that prelate from making an establishment at Lagny, he proves by six or seven very recent examples, that he had reason for being generally opposed to new congregations, a certain proof that the appearance of good did not impose upon him, and that he would only authorise those which, by the nature of their institute, and by a true spirit of virtue and fervor, gave him just and solid hopes.

It was towards the end of the same year, 1647, that his priests established a house at Genoa. They were indebted for it to three noble Genoese, who concurred in that good work with Cardinal Durazzo, then archbishop; but they owed it still more to their labor and indefatigable zeal. The prelate, who could not see without the deepest sorrow the pitiful state of his diocese, kept them for two years in such a continual succession of retreats and fatiguing missions, that Vincent, enemy as he was to inaction, was often alarmed at it. The prayers which he offered for them, and the great example of the cardinal, supported them. We shall endeavor to give in its proper place some idea of the innumerable advantages, which these fervent missionaries procured for the territories of the republic.

The joy which the holy man experienced at the good accounts from Genoa and all the places where his children were established, was moderated by the death of some of them. He

was, above all, much afflicted at that of Mr. Nonely, who was still very young, and had been laboring only a year at Algiers, when he contracted, by attending the slaves who had the plague, the disorder which carried him off in a few days. His death was felt by the Turks almost as much as by the Christians. There was not a person in that barbarous country that was not touched by the zeal which he manifested for the relief of the poor, and particularly for the sick. The most desperate, those whose disorders inspired the greatest horror, were his cherished children. In fine, he was the victim, the martyr of his own charity. Seven or eight hundred Christians, of every nation, attended his funeral. Even the Turks and Moors seemed to forget that he was the enemy of their sect, and mingled with the others. The tears shed over his grave were too general not to be sincere.

These losses followed some others which must have afflicted St. Vincent still more, because less in the order of Providence. Notwithstanding the necessity of filling up these different vacancies, our saint formed, at the same time, the project of planting the faith in the island of Madagascar. We shall hereafter see that this project cost him a great deal; that it mowed down a considerable number of apostolic men, and was for him, during the last twelve years of his life, the source of a torrent of tears and of great affliction.

The very year, in which he entered upon the affair of Madagascar, he realized a project which had occupied him a long time, and the success of which merited for him the blessings of the capital, and of all the provinces of the kingdom. To give a just idea of it, we must go back to its origin.

The city of Paris, the immense extent of which embraces nearly a million of inhabitants, contains within it every extreme of conditions. Opulence there walks by the side of misery; virtue and vice are there to be found; the amusements of the theatre and the tears of penance; the most austere purity and the most daring libertinism have their residence there. From this libertinism, and sometimes from poverty alone, a multitude of children are born, who, in the time of our saint, lost their lives before they became conscious of existence,

or became conscious of it only to undergo every hardship. Their mothers often sacrificed them on the very day they had brought them into the world. They were exposed at the door of the churches, or in the public places. It is true that the commissaries of the Chatelet took them away by order of the police; but this service was almost the only one rendered to these children.

They were taken to a widow in Saint Landri street, who, with two female servants, was charged to bring them up. But as they were very numerous, and alms were not abundant, this woman, for want of nourishment and means, suffered them to die through weakness. Often the servants, even, in order to be relieved from the importunity of their cries, put them to sleep by means of a beverage which shortened their days. Those who escaped this danger were given to any one who would have them, or sold at so low a price, that twenty sous were sometimes sufficient to procure one. Nor had compassion any thing to do with the bargain. Some had them suckled by diseased women, from whom they often imbibed contagion and death; others substituted them to children whom they had suffered to perish. It has even been discovered that many children were inhumanly killed for magical operations, or for those bloody baths which a madness for prolonging life has sometimes invented. That which was still more deplorable was, that many died without baptism, the widow of Saint Landri having acknowledged that she had never baptized any, nor caused any to be baptized.

Such a pitiable state of things sensibly afflicted the heart of our holy priest. The difficulty was to remedy it. Vincent was charitable enough to attempt it, and he was happy enough to accomplish it. He at first entreated some ladies of his assembly, to go to the place and see whether so great an evil could not be stopped, or at least diminished. Those ladies were terrified at the spectacle presented to their eyes by that multitude of children almost abandoned. They could not take charge of all, but they wished to take charge of some, in order to save their life. To honor Divine Providence, whose designs were unknown, they drew lots for twelve. They rented,

in 1638, a house for their accommodation, at the gate of St. Victor, and Madame Le Gras, who joined all the good works of her director, took care of them with the Sisters of Charity.

To the first children, these virtuous ladies added others from time to time, according to their devotion and means. The difference which was soon discovered between the latter and those who remained at Saint Landri, excited their pity in favor of those whom they were obliged to leave there. In the meantime they begged of God to open the treasure of his mercy, and to prepare the way for an undertaking which appeared still more necessary than difficult.

At last, after many prayers and conferences, a general meeting was held at the beginning of the year 1640. The saint then explained in so pathetic a manner, the wants of these poor children, and the glory which would be procured to God from the Christian education which might be given them, that all the ladies present resolved to assume the charge of them. But the servant of God, who foresaw that it would require much more than twelve or fourteen hundred livres, which formed all the funds upon which they could calculate, was unwilling they should undertake any thing, except by way of a trial. In this manner he prevented the murmurs of families, and removed from those virtuous females all occasion to repent of having too easily obeyed the first impulse of fervor.

In order to spare them a part of the expense, besides the money which he himself furnished according to custom; he laid before Ann of Austria a sad and faithful picture of those children; and through that august princess, who regarded every day on which she had done no good work as lost, he obtained from the king twelve thousand livres, the revenues of five large farms. With this help the establishment continued for some years. But the necessities of Lorraine; the fear of a revolution in the state, strong symptoms of which were now manifested in murmurs and factions; the number of these children, which increased every day, and the support of whom exceeded forty thousand livres, all these considerations, which were but too well founded, staggered the courage of

the ladies of Charity. They declared, as of one accord, that so enormous an expense exceeded their means, and that they could no longer bear it.

It was to come to a final determination respecting this important affair, that Vincent convoked a general assembly, in 1648. The Marillacs, the Traversais, the Miramions, and all those venerable persons whose names God has written in the book of life, were present. The saint proposed as a matter of deliberation, whether the good work which was begun, should be continued. He laid down the reasons for and against it. On one hand he represented that the association had contracted no obligation, and that they were at liberty to decide on what seemed most proper. On the other he showed that by these charitable provisions they had hitherto preserved the lives of a large number of children, who would otherwise have perished here, and perhaps hereafter; that those innocent beings in learning to speak, had learned to know and serve God; that some of them were beginning to work, and to relieve others from the expense of their maintenance, and that such a happy beginning was a presage of still greater advantages.

It was then that the holy man, who was no longer master of his sighs and scarcely of his expressions, assuming a more tender and animated tone, concluded in these words: "Remember, ladies, that compassion and charity have caused you to adopt these little creatures as your children; you have been their mothers according to grace, since their natural mothers have abandoned them: determine now whether you also will abandon them. Cease to be their mothers, that you may be their judges; their life and death are in your hands: I am going to take the votes; it is time to pronounce their sentence, and to know whether you will no longer have pity on them. They will live if you continue your charitable care of them; on the contrary, they will infallibly die if you abandon them: experience does not allow you to doubt it."

These words, which a great master of eloquence often admired, were answered only by the tears of the assembly. The unction of the Holy Spirit had insinuated itself into every

heart. It was determined at once that, whatever it might cost, the good work should be continued. They no longer deliberated upon its perpetuation, but only the means of effecting it.

It was in consequence of a resolution so worthy of those who formed it, that the king was asked for the chateau of Bicêtre, designed by Louis XIII, as a hospital for invalid soldiers. Thither they conveyed such of the children as had no need of nurses. But as it was found that the air was too keen for them, two houses were purchased in Paris; one in the faubourg Saint Antoine, where the queen mother laid the first stone of their church; the other, which is now a palace, along side of the cathedral. Their revenue was afterward augmented by the liberality of Louis XIV. But their number, far exceeding their revenue, increased so much that one hundred and fifty thousand livres were not sufficient for their support.* It is thus the abbé de Choisi spoke of it more than fifty years ago. What would he have said in our days, when misery and debauchery render their number incalculable?

We must hope that time which gradually effaces the remembrance of ordinary benefits, will never obliterate in the foundlings the recollection of the signal service which St. Vincent has rendered them; that they will early learn to lisp his name and his glory; that grateful for the Christian education afforded them by his daughters in Jesus Christ, they will from age to age cry out with a prophet: "Those who gave me life abandoned me: I was about to share the rigorous fate of innumerable others, but the God of children, by means of his tender and charitable servant, has taken me under his protection, and his liberal hand has given me much more than I lose."†

It was time that the arrangements for the foundlings should be completed; the least delay would have been utter ruin. The kingdom was soon in such a situation that the best fami-

* The expenses of the foundlings amounts now to more than five hundred thousand livres.

† *Pater meus, et mater mea dereliquerunt me; Dominus autem assumpsit me.—Ps. xxvi, 10.*

lies had reason to fear for their safety. Famine, pestilence, and civil war, a more terrible scourge than the two others, caused the most frightful ravages. Cardinal Mazarin, who found himself master of the favor and authority of his sovereign, must have made, and did in fact make many persons jealous; and as from jealousy to the most violent hatred there is but one step, and sometimes less, he soon had upon his hands as many enemies as he had rivals. The aversion of the great soon reached the people. All took part in this famous quarrel. They gave the name of Frondeurs to those who were opposed to the minister; those who were neutral, or in the interest of the court, were called Mazarins, and sometimes Royalists.

The barricades of Paris, the violent liberation of those who had been arrested by order of the court, the factions which daily increased, induced the queen to take steps at variance with her natural mildness. She resolved to starve out the capital, which appeared for some time not to pay sufficient respect to her authority. For that purpose she left it on the day of the Epiphany, at three o'clock in the morning, with her son, the king, and the greatest part of the court, which followed her to Saint Germain-en-Laye. Vincent did, during this difficult time, all that a good citizen could do, and he suffered all that a faithful subject could endure. As he thought that the poor would be reduced to the greatest extremity, he endeavored to secure a resource in the provisions which were destined for the support of the house of Saint Lazarus, and that of Saint Charles, where many youths were educated according to the plan of the holy council of Trent. Violence and injustice frustrated in part these good designs; but as they had all their merit before God, they must have all their value in the eyes of men.

He afterwards formed a project which may be looked upon as one of the most splendid monuments of his courage, disinterestedness, and disposition to sacrifice every thing rather than resist the dictates of conscience. Ann of Austria honored him with particular kindness; it is certain that under her regency, he always possessed greater fervor than he de-

sired to have. On his part, he entertained for the person and the eminent virtues of that great princess all the respect which a subject could have, and he would have given his life a thousand times for her and for the interests of the king. Yet, as the conduct she pursued towards her people appeared to him to be too rigorous, and as he was terrified at the horrors of very kind which civil war always brings in its train, he thought it necessary to have an interview with her and tell her openly what he thought. He was well aware that in the present state of the agitation of the public mind, the liberty he was going to take might be naturally followed by exile, or some other disgrace; but he feared no disgrace nor exile, when his object was to prevent God from being outraged, and the people from being reduced to extreme misery.

He left Paris before day, and took the road to Saint-Germain. Like a wise politician, he made no one acquainted with his design. However, not to give umbrage to the parliament, which might have thought it wrong that a man like him should leave the city without saying any thing, he sent to his first assistant a letter for Mr. de Molé, who was at the head of that great body. He told him in a few words, that God urged him to go to the court, and that if he had not the honor to pay him his respects before his departure, it was only that he might have it in his power to assure the queen that he had concerted with no one what he had to say to her.

As Paris was under arms, and there were advanced guards in all the suburbs, he was obliged to make a long circuit. It was not completely light when he entered Clichy, and the obscurity had like to be fatal to him. The inhabitants, who had been pillaged the evening before by a troop of cavaliers, had taken up arms to repel them in case of another attack. At the noise of two persons who were approaching on horseback, an alarm was given, some advanced with pikes, others with their muskets cocked and ready to fire. The companion of the saint, who was not very warlike, quaked with fear, according to his own account; "but," adds he, "I thought at the same moment that God would not permit the country people to ill treat a man who had consecrated his life, his con-

gregation, and his possessions to their service." In fact, one of them having recognised and made him known to the others the name of their former pastor awakened the sentiments of veneration which they had formerly entertained for him. They pointed out to him the route which he ought to take, and those which he should avoid, to escape falling into the hands of the enemy, who were scouring the country.

At Neuilly, he ran a new risk; the waters had overflowed and covered a part of the bridge. He was advised not to attempt crossing it, but his courage supported him, and God protected him. To return him thanks on the very spot by an act of charity, he sent his horse to a poor man who was on the other side of the bridge, and who could not otherwise have continued his journey. He at length arrived at Saint Germain, and in a long interview which he had with the queen, he said every thing he could imagine most forcible to dissuade her from the siege of Paris. He represented to her that it was not just to occasion the death of a million of persons by famine, to punish twenty or thirty guilty ones. In fine, he even presumed to advance that, as the presence of the cardinal appeared to be the source of all these disorders, he thought it proper to sacrifice him for a time.

Although he did not lose sight of the respect due to the most virtuous princess in the world, he then spoke with so much force that a moment after, he was surprised and afflicted at it. He calculated less on the success of his negotiation on that account. "For," said he, two days afterwards "never have harsh words succeeded with me; and I have always remarked, that to move the mind, we must not exasperate the heart." He corrected himself on the spot for an air of vivacity which was not to his taste, and having gone from the apartment of the queen to that of her minister, he spoke to him in a tone of mildness which affected the cardinal. Yet he told him in that tone all he had said to the queen, and he afterwards exhorted him to cast himself into the sea, in order to still the tempest. Mazarin answered him kindly: "Well, my father! I will go, if Mr. le Tellier is of your opinion."

That very day the queen held a council; the motives proposed by our saint were discussed. Mr. le Tellier opposed them through reasons of state, as he afterwards declared to the servant of God, and it was determined that the cardinal should remain.

It was almost thought that Vincent would be disgraced; but the court, which knew the attachment of Vincent of Paul to the interests of the king, and the purity of his intentions, did not look upon his honesty as a crime. Le Tellier, from whom he had asked a passport, on the following day sent him one, signed by the hand of the king; that young prince was also good enough to furnish an escort, which conducted him as far as Villepreux.

Had these circumstances been known in the capital, the people, who, without exactly knowing why, were furious against the *Mazarin*, would have looked upon Vincent as one of the most zealous Frondeurs; but that worthy priest, convinced that obedience is the first virtue of subjects, did not suffer the propositions he had made, and the answers he had received, to transpire. Thus was he treated as a Royalist, that is to say, a declared enemy. The hatred of those whom he had excluded from ecclesiastical dignities awoke and became extreme. A counsellor, who pretended to be acting by the authority of the parliament, took possession of the keys of the house of Saint Lazarus. He placed guards at all the doors, and seized all the grain that was in the house. Eight hundred soldiers were lodged in the building. They made a horrible waste every where; and finding nothing else upon which to exercise their fury, they set fire to the wood piles and reduced them to ashes. The parliament being informed of it, was much displeased that such shameful violence should have been exercised in its name. The rabble soldiery were ordered to withdraw. But the damage which they caused during three days was not repaired.

To complete this misfortune, a farm at a short distance from Versailles, which was then the principal resource of Vincent of Paul and his companions, was so completely pillaged by the disbanded soldiers, that there was neither

grain, furniture, nor cattle left. The saint, who from Villepreux had gone to Fréneville, near Etampes, learned there every day some news of this description. But he never indulged in murmuring or impatience; and amidst such severe trials, particularly when multiplied and close at hand, he always repeated: "God be blessed, God be blessed."

Notwithstanding these enormous losses, he did not cease to relieve many unfortunate persons and every day during three months, bread was furnished by his orders to two thousand poor. Yet, to disarm the anger of God, and teach those associated with him to do the same thing, Vincent preached to them by word and example the necessity of doing penance. Badly warmed during a severe winter, fed with bread made of rye and beans, eating so little that he had enough time left to finish himself the reading at table, distributing to the country people whom he made eat with him the best that was served up, he did not labor with less zeal for the salvation of the inhabitants of Valpiuseau; and by a discourse which partook nothing of the weakness of age, he made them so sensible that a satisfaction proportioned to their faults, was the only means of appeasing or turning to good account the storm with which they were threatened, that his sermon alone did more good than those of a whole lent preached by others. The greater part of the parishioners wished to be reconciled with God; and as the curate could not satisfy their eagerness, our saint and one of his priests joined in the labor.

The affairs of state becoming more and more complicated, he resolved to visit the houses of his congregation. He arrived at Mans in a dreadful season. His children, who did not expect such happiness, received him as an angel from heaven. He had calculated upon passing only five or six days with them; but the news of his arrival having spread in spite of him, all the best people in the country came to pay him their respect, and he was so overwhelmed with visits, that he was obliged to remain eight days longer than he had anticipated.

I should not omit here the embarrassment in which the holy man found himself, on account of Mr. de Beaumanoir

de Lavardin, the very same in regard to whose ordinations so many ridiculous stories have been told. He was informed that Vincent had been opposed to his nomination; he knew it, and had often complained of it. The servant of God was surprised to learn that the prelate, who had not yet received his bulls, was already in his diocess. It was not easy to proceed correctly in so delicate a conjuncture. It was unbecoming to remain in his seminary without seeing him, dangerous to see him without giving him previous notice, uncivil to ask whether he would receive his visit. The humility of the saint removed the difficulty. In the morning he sent two of his priests to inform him that he had arrived in his diocess the preceding evening; that he would not remain in it without his permission; and that he begged to be allowed to pass seven or eight days in the seminary.

This compliment on the part of a man, whose uprightness was well known to Mr. de Lavardin, disarmed him. He answered the saint that he was at liberty to remain at Mans as long as he thought proper; and that, if he had no house, it would give him pleasure to offer his own. So obliging an answer required an acknowledgment. But at the very moment that our saint was starting to make it, he learned that the party of the Fronde having prevailed in the town, the bishop and the commander had been obliged to quit the place.

From Mans the servant of God took the road to Angers, where the Sisters of Charity had a considerable establishment. At half a league from Durtal, his horse fell into the river, where he would have been drowned, but for the speedy assistance of one of his priests who accompanied him. This accident did not trouble him: he immediately, although quite wet, mounted his horse again, and afterwards dried his garments as well as he could in a poor hut; and as it was then the time of Lent, he remained without eating until the evening, when he arrived at the inn.

As his first nourishment was the instruction of the poor, this holy old man, fasting and weary, began to catechise the servants of the house. The hostess, edified and surprised at

his charity, ran into the village and gathered all the children, and without having said any thing to him, sent them up to his chamber. Vincent thanked her very kindly. He divided the children into two bands; he gave one to instruct to his companion, and he instructed the other in that style of unction and kindness which gained him every heart. After the catechism he gave them alms, for they were as poor as ignorant.

After having spent five days in fortifying the Sisters of Charity in the virtues of their state, he departed for Rennes. Providence, who was pleased that on each day of his journey he should be subjected to some new trial, exposed him to the greatest danger in which he had ever found himself. As he was crossing a wooden bridge between a mill and a very deep pond, his horse, frightened at the motion and noise of the mill, jumped back so suddenly, that one foot was off the bridge, and he was upon the point of falling into the pond. Vincent thought himself lost, and those who were with him were exceedingly frightened; but God stretched out his hand to him. The horse stopped short, and the saint crossed the bridge without having received any injury. He instantly returned thanks to the Lord, and caused his companion to do the same for a protection so visible and so necessary. In the evening he arrived at a poor tavern: they gave him a room which, although represented to be the best in the house, was very uncomfortable. But some friends of the host having arrived, they were not ashamed to dislodge him, and place him in a room much worse than the first. He paid well every where, and he paid still better in these kinds of places. Having had once to sleep near a room, where a crowd of countrymen spent the night in drinking and talking, instead of complaining of the little respect shown to him, he gave on his departure a most beautiful Agnus to his host, one which, without a breach of propriety, might have been presented to the duchess of Aiguillon herself. It is to be desired that the theology of the saints had not grown so old in our own age, and that it was better known.

Vincent, who was in the habit of paying no visit of mere

civility, thought he could remain *incognito* at Rennes, as he had done at Orleans and Angers; but he was recognised on entering the city. Every thing was in commotion there as well as at Paris, and the royalists were badly received. He had scarcely halted, when a person in office told him, that the visit of a man like him who was of the council of the queen and in her interests, was suspicious to the inhabitants; that it was intended to have him arrested, and that he was informed of it, in order that he might quit the city immediately.

He prepared to depart at once, when a gentleman, who lodged in the same inn having recognised him, said to him aloud in a transport of anger: "Mr. Vincent will be very much astonished if two leagues from this a pistol is fired at his head." This brutal compliment did not much disturb the calm of his soul; but the prebendary of St. Brieu, who had come to meet him, prevented him from setting out, and begged him to see the first president. That magistrate was touched by the wisdom and gravity of the respectable old man; he well understood that his arrival was entirely pacific, and he was not urged to depart.

Vincent of Paul departed however the next morning. As he was about mounting his horse, he saw the same gentleman who had threatened him on the evening before; and it was believed with sufficient reason, that he had been to wait for him on the road to effect his design. The prebendary of St. Brieu, who had the most tender respect for Vincent, wished to share the danger with him, and in spite of every entreaty, he accompanied him to Saint-Méen. Our saint passed there fifteen days in the manner of apostolical men; after having ended his visit, during which he established rules replete with prudence and piety, he gave the rest of the time to the confessional, and he performed during the holy week all the functions of a zealous missionary.

He was on his way to Guienne, when the queen sent him an order to repair immediately to Paris, whither the king had returned. But the fatigue and occupations of such a long and painful journey for a man of his age, caused him to

fall sick at Richelieu, and it became necessary for him to stop there.

The news of his illness having reached Paris, his infirmarian was sent to him from St. Lazarus, who knew better than any other person how to treat him. Vincent, who looked upon himself as the most miserable of men, could not help testifying some uneasiness at the attention paid to him. But, as after the example of holy Job, he scrutinized severely all his actions, he was afraid that the kind of displeasure which he had evinced, might be a cause of uneasiness to the one who had been sent to him. To repair this imaginary fault, which the infirmarian had not perceived, he humbly threw himself at his feet, and asked his pardon both at Richelieu and at Paris when he reached the latter place. One of his assistants, who was present at this second humiliation, was more edified than surprised at it. They were so accustomed to see this great man humble himself to the very earth, both before inferiors and strangers, that whatever he did of that nature was nothing new.

In the mean time the duchess of Aiguillon having learned his sickness, sent him a little carriage to bring him home so soon as he would be able to undertake the journey. The history of this new equipage, which so much alarmed the humility of Vincent of Paul, deserves a place here.

The ladies of his association, who, seeing him very infirm and very badly mounted, feared some accident would befall him, had a carriage made for him. As they knew his extreme aversion for every thing like show, they had it made so plain, that it could not be more so. Nevertheless, the holy priest, in whatever need he stood of it, would never make use of it, and it grew old in some respect from disuse. This was the very carriage which Madame d'Aiguillon sent him to Richelieu. The weak state in which he then was, and the orders of the queen which obliged him to set out, rendered it necessary for him to take it as far as Paris. As soon as he had arrived, he sent the horses back to the duchess of Aiguillon with a thousand thanks. She, in her turn, sent them back to him, beseeching him to pay attention to the need he had of

them. But this man, ever humble, refused them a second time, and protested that if the swelling in his legs, which increased daily, would not permit him to travel on foot or on horse back, he was resolved to keep to the house for the remainder of his life, rather than be drawn in a carriage. To put an end to this dispute which lasted some weeks, the duchess had recourse to the queen and the archbishop of Paris, both of whom decided in her favor. Vincent obeyed, because he must do so, but with great confusion. He called his carriage "*his reproach and his ignominy*." One day when he was paying a visit to some priests of the oratory, four of them having conducted him to the door, he said to the reverend Father Senault, and to those who were with him: "See, my fathers, I am the son of a poor peasant, and I presume to use a carriage." Many others would have added that it was only through obedience. However, this carriage and its accompaniments were for the public use, as well as for his. He made the first old man whom he met, get up with him; and sometimes he took in it the sick to the Hotel Dieu. This trifling service has enabled him to render, during the ten years more which he lived, very important services to the church, and to complete affairs of the greatest consequence, which he could not have even commenced, had he been deprived of it.

As soon as he had paid his respects to the king and to the queen mother, he thought of the means of repairing a part of the evils which the troops had caused in the neighborhood of Paris; and because the holy mysteries had been unworthily profaned at Chatillon, at Clamart, and in some other parishes, he wished that every one in his house should weep upon the very spot for the cruel outrages which this divine victim had suffered in the most august sacrament.

In the mean time, the house of St. Lazarus, which the Frondists had abused, and which had made, notwithstanding this, prodigious efforts to feed a multitude of poor people during the war of Paris, found itself at length in a pitiable situation. Destitute of money, provisions, and resources, it was in want of every thing. Although the saint wished that

his companions should be well supported, and he loudly reprehended those interested procurators, who seem to think that priests overwhelmed with labor are well enough off, when not worse treated than servants; he found himself reduced to the necessity of feeding his children upon barley bread, and some time afterwards, upon oat bread. The example which he set them in this particular, as well as in every other, and still more his tenderness for them, which they never doubted, removed every shadow of a murmur: so that he had no uneasiness on that score. "The poor," said he in a letter to Mr. Almeras, "who know not whither to go nor what to do, who suffer already, and who increase every day, are my burden and my grief."

This burden was soon augmented, and in a few months it became so weighty, that perhaps any other person would have yielded under it. The spirit of discord which agitated France, was more powerful than ever; Mazarin, who had always many enemies, made new ones by causing the arrest of the princes of Condé and Conti with the duke of Longueville. By this action he separated from the party of the king the viscount de Turenne and a number of brave men who would have served their country well. He ruined himself for a time, having been obliged the following year to leave the kingdom. Our enemies profited by these intestine divisions; and the Spaniards, after having seized upon Saint Venant and Ypres, crossed our frontiers, and took Catelet, Capelle and Rhétel. Their armies, and those which were opposed to them, laid waste a great part of Picardy and Champagne. In a little time these two provinces were nearly in the same condition as we have represented Lorraine.

The first news of the excess of the evil came from Guise, which the Marquis of Spondat was not able to take, but the environs of which he had laid waste. Some persons who came from that place to Paris, related that they had seen a great number of soldiers sick, pining away, destitute of every aid, dying in the roads, without sacraments or even human consolation.

This misery made little impression even upon such of the

Parisians as were delighted at the retreat of the enemy. It was not so with Vincent of Paul, to whom God had given the most tender mercy. He immediately despatched two of his missionaries with a horse loaded with provisions and almost 500 livres in money.

These gentlemen saw at the first glance that their scanty supply bore no proportion to the magnitude of the evil. They found along the hedges and upon the roads so great a number of wretched people, some of whom were worn out with suffering, and others only waiting for death, that their provision were consumed in an instant. They hastened to the neighboring towns to purchase more; but how great was their surprise at finding those very places in as deplorable a state as the country. They were in want of every thing. Death, famine, the most humiliating necessities reigned universally. In so terrible a conjuncture these two priests hastened to write to St. Vincent, that the desolation was general throughout all the country, and that these unfortunate people would perish, if they did not speedily receive aid.

At this news the saint resolved to use all possible means to relieve his brethren. Exhausted as the ladies of the association were, whether by the alms sent to Lorraine, or by the enormous expense at which they had been for twelve years for the foundlings, he knew how to excite them to new efforts. But in order to spare them as much as the pressing circumstances would allow, he begged the archbishop of Paris to recommend the necessities of those two provinces to the faithful. The Christian pulpits soon re-echoed their tears and lamentations. The preachers had no need of hyperbole; the suffering far exceeded their expressions.

As the evil was pressing, and as a quarter of an hour's delay might render the remedy useless for many of the sufferers, Vincent, with the first aid he could procure, dispatched at different intervals as many as sixteen of his missionaries; and after them some Sisters of Charity, who, always secure from insult under the protection of their own virtue, fulfilled in a most edifying manner all the duties of their profession. It was only after their arrival that the extent of the misery

which desolated that unfortunate country was fully known. The Vermandois, Thierache, a great part of the inhabitants of Soissonnois, the Remois, the Laonois, and the Retelois were in that pitiful state in which God puts those countries which he visits with his wrath. The famine was such, that men were seen eating the earth, tearing off the bark of trees, and devouring the rags with which they were covered. "But," wrote some of these missionaries of Vincent of Paul, "what inspires the greatest horror, and what we would not relate had we not seen it, they eat their arms and hands and die in despair." The excess of the evil had stifled even the feelings of nature in a people always humane; and when the first assistance arrived from Paris, the inhabitants of Saint Quentin, oppressed by the concourse of their neighbors, and not knowing what to do, in their fear of being besieged, had resolved to throw over the walls of the town the strangers, who to the number of seven or eight thousand had sought a refuge there.

Such was, during nearly ten years, that is, until the peace of the Pyrenees, the condition of two large provinces, and four or five diocesses included in them. It is true that after the first three or four years the evil had its variations, and, as it were, intermissions; but, it is also true, that it often commenced again where it seemed to have ceased; and there were always some cantons which stood in need of assistance, which, if moderate for each one singly, became immense for all collectively.

The places which experienced most the charity of the holy priest, were the cities of Guise, Noyon, Chauni, la Fere, Riblemont, Ham, and seven or eight others of Thierache; those of Arras, Amiens, Péronne, Saint-Quentin, Catelet, and some one hundred and thirty villages of the neighborhood. We must add Basoches, Brenne, Fisme, and near thirty parishes of the same valley. As for Champagne, succor was given particularly to Reims, Rhetel, Chateau-Porcien, Neuchatel, Lude, Saint-Etienne, Rocroi, Mezieres, Charleville, Doncheri, Sedan, Vaucouleurs, and a great number of towns and villages in the vicinity of these places, which were all in extreme misery.

During the first years the expense amounted to fifteen, twenty, and sometimes thirty thousand livres per month; and even then great economy was requisite on account of the high price of provisions, and the numerous and great wants of the poor.

As in a country, where the churches had been profaned, the body of the Son of God trampled under foot, the chalices and sacred vestments carried off, the priests massacred or put to flight, the spiritual necessities must have been equal to those of the body, the missionaries had not a moment of respite; and it is still a mystery how they were able to undergo for so many years a fatigue so severe and overwhelming. In fact, charity often induced them to undertake what galley slaves would not have done except for fear of punishment. One of them, more than eight weeks after the battle of Rhetel, had two thousand Spaniards buried, whose scattered limbs emitted a stench, which would in a short time have spread contagion throughout the neighborhood. Another, whose name was Donat Cruoly, did for the poor, what the heroes of the world would not do for glory. He crossed rivers, walked barefooted, made perilous journeys through the troops, astonished friends and enemies by his intrepid countenance, and carried off from the gendarmes the cattle which the latter had just taken from some poor people and which was their only resource.

So many and so important services rendered to these two provinces, merited for St. Vincent the eulogium and benediction of pastors, magistrates, and people. The curate of Ham, a regular canon, the priest of Rhetel, the lieutenant general of Saint Quentin, and innumerable others wrote to him letters filled with expressions of gratitude. The city of Reims did something more. It was decreed that a mass should be celebrated daily before the tomb of St. Remi for him and the ladies of his association; and in order that all the inhabitants of the place might once at least display their gratitude with one accord, a general procession took place on Whit-Monday, 1651, from the Metropolitan church to that of the holy Pontiff, to beg of God, to show ample mercy to

those who had so generously exercised it in favor of his afflicted people. All the corps of the city attended this pious ceremony, and they were followed by such a numerous crowd, that Reims, although accustomed to great spectacles, had never beheld so prodigious a concourse.

Indeed, neither the inhabitants of Picardy nor those of Champagne could do too much for their benefactors. The expenses incurred for them and their churches finally amounted to more than a million of francs, and what adds a new value to the charity of Vincent is, that at the time he made such efforts in favor of these two provinces, he was also obliged to furnish aid to places which were no less afflicted.

The first cries that came to his ears were those of a considerable number of Irish Catholics, who forced by Cromwell to quit their country, had entered the service of the king, and had been very badly treated during two campaigns. They less resembled men who had contributed to raise the siege of Arras, than fugitives who had escaped a rout. The widows of their comrades and about fifty orphans by whom they were followed, were, like themselves, in a frightful condition. They walked barefooted amidst the snow; and when arrived at Troyes, which had been assigned them for their winter quarters, they had been nine days without tasting bread. Their entrance into that city presented to the inhabitants the most pitiful spectacle they had ever seen. Some of them lay in the square before the church of St. Peter, others gathered in the streets what the dogs would not eat.

Scarcely had Vincent of Paul become acquainted with their situation, when he sent to them one of his priests, who, being an Irishman himself, was better calculated to enter into all their necessities. By means of six hundred livres which he distributed at once, and which inspired emulation into the citizens of Troyes, the severity of their lot was greatly mitigated. But as in the estimation of the servant of God, the relief of the body was only a means to arrive at the reformation of the heart, and as a people who had come from a country almost destitute of pastors into a kingdom the language of which they did not understand, had need of instruction, the

same missionary preached for them twice a week during Lent; and he had the happiness of preparing them to partake of the body of our Lord at Easter. I have spoken here of the Irish at Troyes, that I may not be obliged to return to Champagne. The centre of the kingdom will furnish us with objects nearer home and scarcely less interesting.

The siege of Etampes, the battle of the suburb Saint Antoine, so many marches, countermarches, encampments, battles at the gates of Paris, and in a manner, in Paris itself, had introduced famine, and soon after disease into all the places where the armies had halted. Etampes, Corbeil, Palaiseau, Saint-Cloud, Gonesse, Saint-Denis, Lagni, and, what we must always suppose, all the villages around, presented the aspect of a country which a tremendous storm of hail had mowed to the very earth. Nothing was to be seen but the dead and dying in every direction. Wives wept for husbands, mothers for children, who in many cases had finished their days in horrible torments, some having been cast into hot ovens, others torn with thorns, and some, after an infamous mutilation, having had their bowels laid open, that they might be forced to declare where the ornaments of their churches were.

Vincent, who could not suffice to every thing, engaged different communities to join in his labors, and they did it with great zeal. His missionaries, divided into two principal bands, had for their portion Etampes, Lagni, and all the country contiguous to these two cities, without speaking of Palaiseau, and some other similar places where the soldiers had committed great excesses.

Etampes furnished them with sufficient employment. It was filled with shrivelled, livid, disfigured spectres, to whom the dead bodies which they found heaped up within the walls, pointed out what they might expect for themselves. These were the first objects of horror, which our priests, by means of money and labor, removed from before their eyes. They afterwards perfumed the houses, to make them fit to dwell in. The children who had lost their parents were gathered together, kept and fed in a common house. The convalescents were

strengthened. Those who were sick from fatigue and inanition began to recover.

A source of much affliction to these poor people was to have recovered their health at the expense of the life of some of their benefactors. The poisonous air which the missionaries often breathed, the miserable food which they used in order to spare the means of the poor, the continual motion in which they were day and night, caused nature to sink at last. Four or five fell victims. "Happy," said Vincent, notwithstanding the grief with which he was penetrated, "happy have they been to die with their arms in their hands, and to have gathered upon the field of battle the palm prepared for those who combat to the end." Many Sisters of Charity who had a share in their labors, merited also a share in their crown.

It was soon necessary to begin at Atis, Juvisy, and above all, at Palaiseau, where the troops had remained during twenty days, what had not yet been finished at Lagny and Etampes. Vincent stood in need of all his courage to bear so many assaults of misery made daily upon him. The ardor of his charity sustained him. He made the sighs, the dying cries of an unhappy people, a prey to famine, speak. God who had placed him in the world to be the prodigy of his age, enabled him to find favor with many people, who would perhaps have repulsed another. Many seculars, often of rank and always of virtue, united with him. Mr. du Plessis-Monbart, who possessed both, successfully established a kind of pious bank, to which those who could not furnish money were requested to send the furniture, clothes, and provisions they could spare. The duchess of Aiguillon, who honored Vincent more than the saints are usually honored whilst upon earth, never allowed herself to be asked a second time for what she could grant at the first solicitation.* The servant

* To have a more just idea of the immense liberalities and the profound humility of this illustrious lady, our readers should peruse the funeral oration pronounced in the chapel of the seminary of Foreign Missions the 13th of May, 1675, by Mr. de Brisacier. He says "that she sold twenty-five thousand livres worth of her plate, to procure a decent place in all the desolate parishes, for the legitimate object of the only true worship."

of God, who had given birth to these happy dispositions, rendered them useful by commencing at Paris, what was still continued in Picardy and Champagne, and in all the other places of which we have spoken above.

The blockade of that great city, the premature harvest made by the troops, the scarcity of labor which in less than a week reduced a crowd of workmen to begging, the influx of foreigners who thought they could not be worse off than in their own country, all these circumstances, one of which would have been alone sufficient to famish that immense capital, concurred in its desolation. The evil was great; the remedy, although expensive, was proportioned to it. Vincent himself remarks in a letter which he wrote at the time to a doctor of Sorbonne, that soup was furnished daily in Paris to fourteen or fifteen thousand poor people, who without it would have died of hunger; that eight or nine hundred young girls had been placed out of the reach of danger, by being collected in the houses of pious individuals; and in fine, that a monastery was in actual preparation for the reception of a great number of religious who were scattered throughout the city, some of whom had been obliged to live in suspected places. The saint does not speak of the great share he had in all these good works; and it was only after his death that the services he had rendered to the inhabitants of Palaiseau were known. He rendered one at the same time to the people of Genevilliers, which should remind the children of his attention and charity for their fathers.

The Seine having overflowed to a great extent, Vincent who spent a part of his meditation in lamenting the sufferings of the poor, thought that so considerable an inundation might be fatal to that village, the low situation of which naturally exposed it to the violence of floods. No one had spoken to the holy priest of it: but his heart said enough to him. Without inquiring any farther about what might be the state of things, he had a large cart loaded with bread, which he immediately sent thither with two of his missionaries.

This succor, which was looked upon as the effect of a par-

ticulär inspiration, came in very good time. Hunger had begun to be felt sharply at Genevilliers. The inhabitants, half under water in their houses, uttered useless cries ; no one went to their aid, and it was even dangerous to attempt it on account of the rapidity of the stream. Our missionaries unloaded their provisions into a boat ; and rowing from one side to the other, distributed their bread through the windows, because all the doors were under water. The different currents, which alarmed the boatmen, carried them into danger more than once ; but they continued this charitable office until this little deluge had subsided. When it was over, the poor people, moved at the service which our saint had rendered them, deputed some of the principal inhabitants to him, to return him thanks in the name of the others. He received them kindly ; but it was easy for them to understand that the honor of serving Jesus Christ in his suffering members, was the only reward of which he was ambitious.

In thus fulfilling the duties of a good citizen, the servant of God never forgot those of a faithful subject. Persuaded that obedience to the king was the only means of calming the troubles, he did all that depended on him to stifle the seeds of revolt which had sprung up all around. He first induced to strict residence several prelates whose affairs called them to Paris, but who could not absent themselves from their dioceses without injury to the authority of the prince, which was maintained by their presence. He dealt rather with God than with men. He invited a great number of virtuous persons to prevail with his mercy, by prayer, fasting, alms, and all the practices of solid penance. Although the life of his missionaries was only a tissue of hard labor, he would every day have three of them, that is, one of each order fast for the peace of the kingdom. He, although infirm, and more than seventy years old, was the first to submit to the law. No rule had any exception for him.

He inspired several persons of distinguished birth with the same sentiments of penance : and we know, said a virtuous priest, that ladies of very delicate constitutions spared their bodies neither haircloth, nor discipline, nor other similar mor

tifications, in order to unite before God their austerities to his and those of his congregation. It is true that the saint was inexhaustible on this point. Every day at morning prayer, he repeated twice these words of the litany, *Jesus, God of peace*, and he pronounced them in a tone so moving, that it was impossible not to recognise the voice and sighs of his heart. The proximity of the enemy's troops who sought to come to an engagement, the fear of an action, or the news of a battle fought, penetrated him with sorrow. As he saw every thing in the light of faith, the conquest of the whole universe was not worth one of those souls which the victory plunges into the abyss. During the battle of the suburb Saint Antoine, whose noise reached his very ears, this worthy priest, prostrate between the vestibule and the altar, offered himself as a victim to the justice of God, and conjured him by the bowels of his mercy to withdraw the hand which dealt such terrible blows upon his people.

During these difficult times, he, as well as all good people, and those who adhered to the party of the king, were often insulted. At the door of the conference hall, he was loaded with insults, struck, and threatened with death; but he revenged himself only by begging pardon for the guilty from the magistrate who wished to punish them. He was still more ill-treated at a short distance from his house. A furious man, under pretext that the saint had jostled him in passing, gave him a blow, adding by the blackest calumny, that he was the cause of the taxes with which the people were loaded. Vincent, instead of having him arrested, as he might have done, went on his knees before him, offered to him his other cheek, and publicly confessed, not that he was the author of the subsidies the imposition of which was not his province, but that he was a great sinner, and asked pardon of that man for any cause he might have given him for such treatment. The profound humility of the venerable priest touched the heart of the offender. He came the next day, to offer, in his turn, the most humble apology to the servant of God. Vincent received him as a good friend, begged him to spend seven or eight days with him, and profited by that time to engage him

in the exercises of a retreat; and after having gained him to himself by his meekness, he afterwards gained him to God by his charity and affection.

Whilst he was so unjustly accused of being the author of the public calamities, he was occupied night and day in endeavoring to find the means to put a stop to them. So many alms, fasts, mortifications and labors on his part and that of his missionaries, are incontestable proofs of it. Yet, as he saw this was not sufficient, he thought it his duty to do what had been done before him by many saints, whose state of life engaged them to more strict solitude than his did.

After their example, he endeavored to unite again to the party of the king those of the princes who had abandoned it. But as he was impenetrable above all in regard to affairs which might render him prominent, all that we can learn of his negotiation is, that a little time before the peace was concluded, he had long interviews with the queen, the duke of Orleans, the prince of Condé, and Cardinal Mazarin. Would it be rashness to believe that the peace, which soon followed these first steps, was the fruit of them, and that God granted it at last to the prayers and efforts made by the holy priest to effect it?

It was then represented to him that the civil war being happily terminated, it was just to retrench the extraordinary mortifications, which he had established on occasion of it; but he had them continued, because the war with Spain was still carried on. He had at last the consolation to witness the termination of that war which had lasted twenty-five years, and which, together with the intestine broils, had exhausted the kingdom. Alas! what ravages would not so many combined evils have caused, if the man of mercy had not opposed to them a patience incapable of repulse, an invincible courage, and an inexhaustible charity! Let us resume some facts of his history which the course of our recital has prevented us from placing in their proper order. One of the most considerable is the establishment of the missionaries of Warsaw, which has given birth to so many others in Poland.

Louisa Maria Gonzaga, daughter of Charles, duke of

Mantua, had known Vincent of Paul in Paris, where she had lived a long time. She had often attended those famous assemblies of ladies, whose liberality and zeal we have so often praised. Ladislaus Sigismond IV, king of Poland, having asked a wife of Ann of Austria, received from her this princess, who was possessed of great qualities, but had not that of pleasing him. Happily she married after his death, Casimir V, who soon succeeded Sigismond. It was then, that having become more the mistress of her actions, she followed her inclination for doing good. As she knew that kings do not reign in a manner worthy of God, unless God reigns by them, she desired to establish his empire in the hearts of her subjects, and particularly those who had been most neglected. It was with this view that she asked some priests of our saint's congregation, in 1651. Vincent could send her only a small number. But Mr. Lambert, one of his first companions, was equal to many. He united with the most excellent health, consummate wisdom, indefatigable zeal, and a humility so profound, that he would have been the most eminent man of the age in this virtue, had not Vincent lived.

The saint could not make a greater sacrifice than that of Mr. Lambert. He was, after Mr. Portail, his principal resource in innumerable affairs, and he acknowledged himself that by his absence he was in the situation of a man who has lost one of his arms. Yet, so soon as he believed that God required him elsewhere, he did not hesitate to make the sacrifice, and assuredly it cost a great deal to him who was the victim.

The arrival of these two missionaries gave great pleasure to their majesties, and they were received by them with every possible demonstration of kindness. Lambert was esteemed, cherished, and respected by the great and the people, as soon as he was known, and it was not long before he became so. But this short time of consolation was well paid for by the sufferings which followed it. Casimir, notwithstanding his victories, could not banish from his kingdom either famine or pestilence which follows close in its train. Both caused great

havoc in Warsaw, where the people were entirely neglected. Lambert flew to the aid of the wretched, with the consent of the court; and the queen directed that he should be lodged in the king's own chamber. Warsaw stood in need of such a man. As soon as any one was afflicted with the disease, those of his own house placed him in the street, where he must die of hunger, and soon afterwards be devoured by the dogs. Lambert restored order in the city, and our saint, who learned it from the queen, was greatly consoled by it. But God, who was always pleased to try him like gold in the furnace, soon caused bitterness to succeed that joy of which he alone was the object. On leaving Warsaw, the queen, who had the greatest confidence in this worthy missionary, desired him to follow her into Lithuania. Although by the orders of that princess every possible attention was paid to him, he soon fell a victim to his zeal and labors. The confessor of the queen, the queen herself, wrote to Vincent in a style which marked how sensible they were of this loss. Vincent felt it more than any one, and he was the more afflicted as he learned at the same time the loss which the seminary of Annecy had sustained by the death of one of the most prudent and most virtuous priests of his congregation. But on this occasion and many similar ones, he only said with the most afflicted and the most patient of men: "God gave him to me, and God has taken him away, blessed be his holy name."

Some months before the establishment at Warsaw, Vincent had interred the ancient prior of the religious who served the nouse of Saint Lazarus, the same who had made so many exertions to get him to accept it. Never had a benefactor greater reason to rejoice at his liberality. He always experienced the most perfect gratitude from his adopted children. But the attention which our holy priest paid him, had nothing of that weakness which is sometimes discovered in human friendships. I will give an example which is too honorable to both to be omitted.

An abbess of high rank was, for scandalous faults, imprisoned by order of the queen. Mr. Le Bon, who was under great obligations to her, was requested to use all his influence

in her favor. As he knew the absolute power he had over the mind of the servant of God, he did not doubt that he would obtain whatever he should think proper to ask. He was deceived: the saint answered him that he was sorry he could not comply with his wishes, but that his conscience would not permit him. The prior was much hurt at the refusal. Happily, the weight which he had upon his heart, did not oppress him long. He learned from a sure source that the lady for whom he had interested himself deserved no favor. From that moment he did justice to the firmness of the holy priest, and having thrown himself at his feet, he asked pardon for the hasty judgment he had formed of him. Vincent, who had also fallen on his knees, was charmed with this explanation; and after this momentary coolness, he gave him on every occasion proofs of the most humble and sincere deference.

His tenderness appeared to redouble when he found himself on the point of losing him. In his last sickness he rendered him every service of the most ardent charity. When he saw him approaching his last end, he made all his missionaries go on their knees around him; and during his last agony, which was long, he recited the prayers appointed by the church for that last moment.

When this good old man, who was more than seventy-five years of age, had breathed his last, and they had recommended his soul, Vincent, after having besought God in a very affecting manner to be pleased to apply to the dear deceased the little good which his congregation had heretofore been able to do, begged his companions in the most humble terms never to forget that great benefactor. He caused his funeral to be performed in a most honorable manner; and to perpetuate the remembrance of the services which his congregation had received from him, he had them engraved upon the marble, with the epitaph of the deceased. He also desired that a solemn service should be performed every year on the 9th of April, the day of his decease. Besides this, his house performs two others every year for the repose of the souls of the former religious.

Some months after the death of Mr. Le Bon, the holy priest held a kind of general assembly, in which, amongst other good regulations, one was made to exert a proper firmness in the tribunal of penance: for it is well to remark that, if Vincent of Paul did not approve that extreme rigor which condemns every body, he was a great enemy to laxity in morals. He more than once congratulated the bishops and the Sorbonne on their having censured those monstrous propositions of which enlightened pagans would have been ashamed. He wished that his congregation should attach itself inviolably to that truly Christian practice, which is founded upon the gospel, the writings of the holy doctors, and the decisions of the apostolic see. But if he had true zeal for the purity of morals, he had not less for the integrity of dogmas. His labors and combats against the too real heresy of Jansenius, are an incontestible proof of it. But to place it in its full light, we must necessarily go back to the source of the evil.

Book Fourth.

CORNELIUS JANSSEN, so well known by the name of Jansenius, after having completed his humanities in Holland, studied theology under Jacques Janson, a man very much attached to his own opinions, and who greatly preferred the doctrine of Baius, to that of the sovereign pontiffs who had censured it. It was in the school of this doctor, that Jansenius imbibed the first principles of his system on grace. To strengthen him in it, Abbé Saint-Cyran, who had known him in Paris, caused him to come to Bayonne, where he procured employment for him. They both applied themselves to the reading of the Fathers, and particularly St. Augustin. This last was the one for whom Jansenius had all his life a decided preference. Although his health was rather weak, he read the works of the holy doctor ten times, and those which he composed against the Pelagians, nearly thirty times.

Such continued study did not prevent him from trying his pen upon matters which had not much connection with grace and charity. His *Mars Gallicus*, in which the French nation and its monarchs are very badly treated, is an incontestible proof of it. This extravagant satire merited the bishopric of Ypres for its author; and it was in that see, that Jansenius, after twenty-two years labor, finished his *Augustinus*. However right his system may have appeared to him, he himself was sensible of its rigor. He did not fail to put it under the protection of Saint-Cyran. He was particularly desirous that some congregation would adopt it, being persuaded, as he told his friend, that "such people, when they once espouse a cause, go beyond all bounds."

The bishop of Ypres proposed to himself nothing less than to reform the ideas which the Catholic schools of his time held with regard to grace. This project was doubtless great, but corresponded to the views of him who had formed it. Jansenius thought that not only the Dominicans and Jesuits were a hundred miles from the truth, but he also believed that for five hundred years the ancient doctrine was unknown both to people and pastors; that it no longer subsisted, except in prayers, of which those who used them understood nothing; that the scholastics appeared to know "neither faith, nor hope, nor sufficient grace, nor efficacious grace, nor vice, nor virtue, nor actual sin, nor original sin, nor the liberty of man, nor his slavery; in a word, and this will be saying every thing, neither the Old nor the New Testament."

So many blind persons stood in need of being enlightened; it was necessary to put into their hands the thread of tradition which they had lost for five centuries. Jansenius undertook it, and we shall soon see in what manner.

He lays it down as a principle that from the sin of Adam, pleasure is the only spring which sets the will in motion; that without an attraction inclining it to good, it cannot do good, as it cannot do evil without an attraction to evil; that these two attractions act by degrees, so that the stronger overcomes the weaker, and so invincibly overcomes it, that it is as impossible for man to act against a superior attraction, as it is impossible for him to act without any attraction, or even without knowledge.

From this principle of a delectation, which man cannot procure for himself when he possesses it not, because it is indeliberate; and which he cannot conquer, when he possesses it, because it is irresistible; from this principle, I say, which Jansenius without ceremony places to the account of St. Augustin, he concludes, 1. that there is no more liberty upon earth; or if there be any, it must be compatible with the most powerful necessity; 2. that grace has not, nor can have any other effect than that which is actually produced in a heart captivated by concupiscence; 3. that the just man himself, when he is in want of a grace superior to concupiscence,

cannot, whatever pains he may take, whatever efforts he may make, accomplish the law imposed upon him; 4. that since God wills the salvation of those only, to whom he renders salvation possible, the Redeemer, whose will was always conformable to that of his Father, did not shed his blood for the salvation of those who perish. Jansenius is so violent on this last article, that, to be a Catholic, according to him, it becomes necessary to publish upon the house tops, that Jesus Christ died no more for the salvation of so many unfortunate men who are every day lost, than he died for the salvation of the devil.* Such is, in substance, the system of the bishop of Ypres, and we are ready to show that we have not changed it.

That prelate had been carried off by pestilence two years, when his book made its appearance. This posthumous fruit was soon a cause of trouble and discord. Although Saint-Cyran found blemishes in it, he spoke of it as a third gospel upon grace, and his judgment gave the tone to that of Port Royal. But this favorable prejudice was balanced by an unfortunate counterpoise. The Augustinus had but just appeared, when Urban VIII branded it on the 6th of March, 1641. It underwent the most violent attacks in the capital of this kingdom, but it also found there the most vigorous defenders. Isaac Habert, prebendary of Paris, combatted it publicly in three sermons preached in the cathedral. Antoine Arnauld opposed three apologies to these three sermons. On both sides they wrote, but each one became more confirmed in his first opinion.

Many sensible persons, who lamented these divisions, thought that the most imposing authority should be substituted to disputes. It was with this design that Nicholas Cornet, syndic of the faculty of theology, made from the book of Jansenius an extract which he reduced to five propositions, which since that time have become so famous in the church. This summary, which the great Bossuet always looked upon as the most beautiful abridgment that could be made of so large a volume as that of Jansenius, was presented to the Sorbonne

* Jansenius, lib. 3, de Gr. chr. cap. 21.

on the 1st of July, 1649. It was determined by a plurality of voices that the propositions should be examined.

The defenders of Jansenius, who did not like this kind of examination, except when they calculated upon its being entrusted to them, parried the blow by an appeal to the parliament. What was to be done in such a conjuncture? After many deliberations, it was thought that the shortest way was to beg the common Father of the faithful to pronounce upon a difference, which began to exasperate the minds more and more. Mr. Habert, who from being prebendary of Paris had become bishop of Vabres, drew up a letter to Innocent X, who was then in the chair of St. Peter. The principal bishops of the assembly of the clergy signed it separately, and it was sent into the provinces, in order that the pope, being urged on all sides, should not defer the judgment which was asked of him. St. Vincent of Paul, under whose eyes and in whose house this letter was composed, neglected nothing to multiply the signatures, and his solicitude was not useless.

Whatever might be the contempt entertained for Vincent by a party which spared only those wedded to its interests, it is certain that, even after the death of Saint-Cyran, great efforts were made to win him to Jansenism. But, had he not been disgusted with the horrors which that desperate system inspires, he must have been so with the caprices and variations of its defenders. At a time when they should have acted with caution, unexpected propositions escaped them, which revealed a disposition for innovation. The Abbé de Barcos, without any reason, foisted one into the preface of a book on *Frequent Communion*, in which he taught that "St. Peter and St. Paul are two heads of the church, making but one." This proposition was censured at Rome, and Vincent had a great share in its condemnation.

It appears from several of his letters that he would not have been sorry, had the book on "Frequent Communion" experienced the same fate. That in which he expresses himself most at large, is addressed to Jean d'Horgni, one of his first seven companions. D'Horgni had talents, zeal, and a certain taste for reforms, which itself stood in need of being a

little reformed. As he had for Vincent of Paul all that respect with which the holy man inspired those who knew him, he thought it his duty to propose to him the difficulties which he had with regard to the book of Jansenius as well as that of Mr. Arnauld. He did so in two letters, but in such a manner as to create a fear that he had already taken his determination. Vincent answered him likewise in two letters, and although I have read many of the kind, I have met with none of his, in which there is so much fire and vivacity. Both of them, but particularly the last one, speak of the book on "Frequent Communion."

Vincent says there in substance, that it may be that some persons have profited by that work; but that, "if it has been of service to a hundred by inspiring them with greater respect for the sacraments, there are at least ten thousand whom it has injured by keeping them away from them altogether;" that we no longer see the holy communion frequented, even at Easter, as it formerly was; that many curates in Paris complain of it; that it is true there are but too many who abuse the holy Eucharist, "and wretch that I am," says he, "I more than all;" but we must not correct one abuse by another; and it is a great one, to keep away from the holy table, not for eight or ten days, but for five or six months, good religious persons who lead very pure lives, as it is known that "these new reformers" are in the habit of doing; that St. Charles was very far from this excess, when he recommended nothing so much in his councils as frequent communion, and decreed severe penalties against preachers who should dissuade the faithful from it, directly or indirectly.

As in order to defend the book and the author, D'Horgni repeated what was then said, that the doctor Arnauld only designated those who admit sinners too easily to the participation of the holy mysteries, Vincent acknowledges that it is an evil which St. Charles deplored; but he contends at the same time that the book on "Frequent Communion" goes farther, since it highly extols in the preface, page 36, the piety of those who wish to defer communion till the end of their lives; that it asserts, in the second chapter of the third part,

that it is speaking in an unworthy manner of the King of heaven, to say that he is honored by our communions; and that when it contends, as it does without any modification, that those alone are permitted to communicate who are entirely purified from the images of their past life by a divine love which is pure and without mixture, who are perfectly united to God alone, entirely perfect and entirely irreproachable; we would have to conclude with it, that those who, according to the practice of the church, communicate with the ordinary dispositions, are dogs and antichrists. No, continues he, with such principles, communion is no longer suited to any one but Mr. Arnauld, who, after having placed his dispositions at so high a point, as to terrify a St. Paul, does not fail to boast several times in his apology, that he says mass every day.

The saint combats with the same force all the objections of Mr. d'Horgni, particularly one in which he undertook to justify certain texts of Arnauld, by other texts which were opposed to them: He shows him by the example of Calvin, that it is customary with innovators to sow contradictions in their works, and procure an issue which may answer their purpose. "I heard the late Mr. de Saint-Cyran declare," continues he, "that if he had pronounced truths in a room where there were persons capable of understanding them, and from thence should go into another place where there were persons incapable of it, he would tell them the contrary." He even pretended that our Lord did so, and he recommended the practice of it.

As d'Horgni had not adduced the authority of the prelates and doctors, who had approved the book on "Frequent Communion," the servant of God did not speak of it. Had he been urged on this point, he would, no doubt, have answered, as others then did, first, that more than eighty bishops, although earnestly solicited to approve the work, had constantly refused; secondly, that amongst those whose names are still seen at the head of the book, there were some who had never read it. Of this I have an incontestable proof under my eyes.*

* See the large life of St. Vincent, vol. i, p. 532

The other letter is almost entirely devoted to the book of Jansenius. The saint therein says very wisely, that the assiduous perusal which that prelate had made of St. Augustin, proves no more in favor of his followers, than it would prove in favor of Calvin; that the council of Trent understood the holy doctor better than the bishop of Ypres and his adherents; in a word, that St. Augustin must be explained by the council, and not the council by St. Augustin, because the first is infallible and the second is not. He adds, that in the present affair, we have nothing to do with Molina, nor with the middle science, which is not an article of faith; that if this doctrine is new, it is not so with the one establishing that Jesus Christ died for all; that it is that of St. Paul, of the apostle St. John, of St. Leo, and of the last general council. He reasons in the same manner on the possibility of the observance of the commandments of God, and on sufficient grace. He proves both by texts which error may elude, but can never destroy.

With regard to the advice which d'Horgni had given him, to suffer each one of his congregation to think as he pleased on these matters, he contends powerfully against it; and after having indicated in two words, the fatal effects which diversity of opinion would produce in a community, he concludes, that if any one of his company should adopt the new opinions, he would do well to leave it, and the company would do well to beg him to do so.

However severe these last words may appear, the saint did not come to such a painful extremity, until after having exhausted all the means which charity and prudence furnished. He prayed much, made his companions pray, and did not adopt his last resolution, until he had consulted those whose knowledge and experience enabled them to give him good advice.

Such violent remedies, which he perhaps used but once, cost his tender heart a great deal: he feared nothing more than to find himself forced to use them frequently. Night and day he hoped that authority would settle this dispute, which had already produced so much excitement in the

clergy, both secular and regular. As his respect for the vicar of Jesus Christ led him to believe that his decision would again unite all minds, he used every endeavor to engage as many bishops as he could, to subscribe the letter which was to be sent to the pope. He told them in substance that they could not too soon arrest an evil, which was making additional progress every day; that it was believed at Rome that the greater part of the bishops of France professed the new opinions, and that it was proper to show that there were very few; that as the situation of Europe did not permit to assemble a general council, recourse must be had to the first See, to which the Church refers us in the council of Trent; that although some persons of Saint Cyran's party might not yield to the decision of the pope, since that abbé did not believe even the councils, as he knew from frequent intercourse with him; still it would not be so with the greater number, as it appeared from the prompt conclusion of the affair of the two heads making but one. The saint did not fail to adduce the number and authority of the prelates who had already subscribed. He insisted particularly on the example of the virtuous and penitent bishop of Cahors who had recognised, in a libel which the party had just scattered abroad, the spirit of imposture which accompanies heresy, and had made it a motive for taking up arms against the enemies of the church.

If Vincent had reason to be satisfied with the answers given him by almost all those whom he had invited to sign the letter to the holy Father, he must have been afflicted at the one given him in common by his two great friends the bishops of Aleth and of Pamiers. Under pretext that minds were too much agitated, they proposed a middle term, which would not have failed to sanction error, by placing it upon a level with truth. They wished that the holy see, instead of deciding the affair fully, should prohibit under several penalties the agitating of the question both in the schools and in the pulpit. Vincent thought it his duty to reply to their letter. He did it forcibly, but in a respectful manner. He represented to them that, if to condemn the dogmas of Luther and

Calvin, delay had been used until their partisans had been in a disposition to submit, the heresy of those two innovators would have seduced a much greater number of persons; that it is true that in the present affair each one believed he had reason on his side; but that all heretics had said the same; that there was this difference between the two parties, that the one asked for judges and the other did not want them; that the defenders of Jansenius declined the judgment of the holy see, because they knew it possible; and they pretended to ask that of a council, because they believed it impossible in the present state of things; and if they thought it possible, they would reject it, as they rejected the other; that, moreover, the question was not about a point confined to theory; that the faithful could not live much longer uncertain whether Jesus Christ died for them or not; for there had been some found who seeing that the dying were exhorted to put their confidence in the goodness of our Lord, who died for them, told the sick not to trust to that, because Jesus Christ did not die for all.

If this letter did not produce all the effect which Vincent of Paul expected, it at least disposed these two bishops to submit to the judgment of the apostolic see. The bull by which Innocent X condemned the five famous propositions, met with no contradiction at Aleth; it was there received and published as it has since been throughout all the kingdom. The author of the life of Mr. Pavillon remarks it. This prelate held still many years afterwards the same opinions. I know, says the illustrious and pious de Rancé, that he changed them afterwards, but I know also what address and what artifices were made use of, to bring him to it.

Vincent, who was no longer upon earth, had not the grief of witnessing the fall of a man who was dear to him. But if it would have surprised, it would not have shaken him. He continued always to believe that it was of the greatest consequence that the common Father of the faithful should make them hear his voice, and he had the consolation to see in a short time eighty-eight bishops soliciting his judgment. On their part, the defenders of Jansenius, who feared nothing

more than the decision of the pope, did not forget themselves. Desperate at seeing that a writing in the form of a circular letter, which they had addressed to the bishops, had not prevented many from signing the address, they resolved upon movements at Rome itself, and by multiplying obstacles, they endeavored to avert, at every cost, the blow which threatened them. They had already an agent in that city, who neglected nothing to protect their doctrine. Fearing that one man alone could not calm the storm, they sent him a reinforcement of three other doctors. Mr. de Saint-Amour, furnished with a letter from ten bishops who did not think with the rest of their colleagues, was at the head of the deputation. St. Amour was full of zeal for the doctrine of Jansenius, and would have given his life, to prove that it was perfectly conformable to that of St. Augustin. Had he read carefully the works of that doctor on grace? This I know not; but I do know, what I could not have believed, had he not himself written it, that he had never read the book of Jansenius.

Vincent of Paul had no sooner been informed of the manœuvre of these gentlemen, than he thought that, what had been done for error, should be done for the truth. Messrs. Hallier, Joisel, and Lagault, who were all three doctors of Sorbonne, offered to undertake the journey; and our saint, with whom these three respectable men were strictly united, promised them not to abandon them either in France or Italy. Hallier rendered on this occasion great services to the Church; and we shall see in a moment that the holy see did not forget him.

These deputies soon perceived that their journey was necessary. The doctor Saint-Amour, whom letters from Rome described as one of the most artful men, endeavored to persuade the Dominicans that the efficacious grace of the Thomists was no less attacked than that of the new Augustin, and to impress the cardinals with the belief that he was neither a Jansenist nor a defender of Jansenius. "For our parts," said Mr. Lagault, "we loudly proclaim, that we only aim at Jansenius, who has been troubling the Church for ten years; that if these gentlemen are unwilling to defend

him, we have nothing to do with them, and that notwithstanding we will not fail to urge one point." They did it in fact, but with infinite trouble. No one can read without emotion the obstacles which they had to encounter. Their letters, the originals of which are still extant, state in substance that every means were employed to spin out the affair, that it was to be feared that the end could not be reached in a court which advances at so slow a pace and under a pontiff who was very old; that these delays exposed them to very considerable fatigue; that they had daily to undergo, on the part of the Jansenist ambassadors, numerous contradictions, suppositions, and black calumnies; that they were astonished how persons who made a profession of piety, could resolve to quibble so grossly in point of religion and to lie so insolently; and that no one but a sacrilegious man would, in order to retain people in a false doctrine, employ the horrible lies which had been circulated throughout France and Italy by the emissaries of a party which boasted of its sanctity.

This information, which could not but greatly afflict a man so sensible to the evils of the Church as Vincent of Paul, was almost always mingled with something well calculated to console him. He learned from the beginning that Innocent X was resolved to settle the affair; that notwithstanding his advanced age, he labored with indefatigable zeal in the examination of the five propositions; that it was an admirable thing, which could only come from God, that his holiness, at the age of eighty-one, should, contrary to his disposition and the custom of the country, assist with inexpressible attention at the congregations which often lasted four hours, and which were held sometimes thrice a week; that the cardinals, animated by such an example, abandoned every thing to occupy themselves in this affair. Vincent, on his side, encouraged the deputies by frequent letters. "I hope," said he in one of those which he wrote to Mr. Hallier, "that the divine goodness will soon restore peace to his Church, and that by the aid of your proceedings, the truth will be recognised, and your zeal exalted before God and man." We might take these

last words as a prophecy, when we behold, some years afterwards, Mr. Hallier appointed bishop of Cavaillon by the pope.

The censure of the five propositions for which the servant of God waited with so much confidence, was soon announced to him in a more precise manner. The letters which he received from the anti-Jansenist envoys, stated that in the audience which the ambassador of France had procured for the two new deputies of the opposite party,* instead of saying a single word of the matter in question, they had amused themselves in railing against the Jesuits, and in offering to prove that they were the authors of more than fifty heresies; that the holy Father, who had granted them eight or nine audiences, although he had granted but one to Mr. Hallier and his companions, had declared to them that he was ready to hear them if they had any thing new to produce; that for a whole year they had been entirely at liberty to instruct the cardinals and consultors personally or by writing; that they had refused four or five hearings which had been offered them; that they acknowledged that the writings of their adversaries had been communicated to them; that in fact it was useless to hear them any more than their antagonists, since the only question was a book, which was alone to pronounce its own apology or censure; and that in fine after twenty-five congregations, besides ten others which the pope had caused to be held before him, he had given his bull; that those gentlemen, with tears in their eyes, had promised perfect obedience to this decree, but that there was reason to doubt of their sincerity, since they had told confidants, that their sense, which was that of Jansenius, still subsisted.

Vincent of Paul, after having returned thanks to God for the protection, which he had just given his Church, thought of nothing but of the means of procuring a prompt submission to the apostolical rescript. His first care was to prevent those who had the advantage in this kind of combat, from exhibiting towards their adversaries those airs of triumph

* These last deputies were Father Desmarés and Doctor Manessier. They came to the aid of Mr. de la Lane, and Angran and de Saint-Amour.

which are looked upon as insults by vexed minds. Full of zeal against error, and charity towards those who had been its victims, all his attention was directed to smooth the way for their return to unity. With this design he paid visits to superiors of communities, doctors in theology, and several other persons who had embraced Jansenism. He represented to them modestly, and with his usual prudence, that to re-unite minds, it was necessary to keep within the bounds of the most exact moderation, to advance nothing either in sermons or private conversations, which might humble those who had supported the proscribed dogma, to show them a real friendship in a conjuncture so humiliating for self-love, and to gain, by the most respectful treatment, persons who would be shocked by any other method.

It was with these feelings, so prudent and so Christian, that he paid a visit of civility to such of the disciples of Saint-Cyran as had retired to Port Royal. The report having been circulated that they submitted without restriction, he congratulated them on it; and during two or three hours which he passed with them, he gave them particular evidences of his esteem, affection, and confidence. He afterwards went to see some persons of distinction, who held a considerable rank in the party. All promised entire submission to the apostolic decree. Some, at the head of whom appeared the pious and learned Thomassin, were faithful to their word: unfortunately it was not so with the greater number.

In fact, it was soon known both in Paris and Rome, that their beautiful protestations were in no ways sincere. The famous writing in three columns, which these gentlemen distributed in public, proved that, under pretence of rejecting a purely Calvinistical sense, which was not in question, they continued to maintain the whole error of the sense of Jansenius, which alone was in question, and the only one which the Pope intended to condemn. This Dr. Hallier explains much at length in a letter, in which he tells St. Vincent that the Jansenists have no solid ground, when they endeavor to cover themselves by such ridiculous tergiversations; that the propositions being clear, they endea-

vored to render them ambiguous by explanations remote from the natural sense of the words and from the sense of Jansenius ; that Innocent X had testified that he condemned them in as much as they contained the opinions of Jansenius, which are the same as those of the Jansenists, as appears by their apologies of Jansenius and the rest of their books ; that the pope had given in his bull a sense to the fifth proposition, because it was not contained in the words, but only in Jansenius, and that he has condemned it in that sense, which is that of the book and its defenders, &c.

After having proved that, by following the method of these new doctors, there is no bad proposition that may not escape censure, Hallier demonstrates by a great number of facts, that there can be no doubt of the intention of the sovereign pontiff. " If it be true," says he, " that the sense of Jansenius is protected, why did the pope refuse bulls to a man, whose only crime was his having signed the Augustinus of that prelate ? Why did he cause a general of an order who favored the Jansenists to be deposed ? Why, without any other reason, did he banish another religious to Malta ? Why did he give a bishopric in the kingdom of Naples to an Augustinian who, in the congregations, had defended the Catholic faith against the Jansenists, and even against his own superior ? Why did he offer me the bishopric of Toul," &c. " In fact," adds he, " The Jansenists know better than any one, that it is they who are aimed at ; and it is for this reason that they fled shamefully from Rome, without taking leave of any of the cardinals of the congregation," &c.

It appears from subsequent letters, that it was feared at Rome lest Vincent, accustomed to judge of the uprightness of others by his own, might suffer himself to be caught by the equivocal marks of submission given by the party. But the deputies had time to be convinced that they had taken the alarm too easily. Without transgressing the bounds of a just moderation, our saint knew so well how to combine his arrangements, that he removed the error from all the places, the guardianship of which had been committed to his care. His congregation, was, as it ought to be, the first object of his attention.

He studied the inclinations of all his priests, well resolved to rid himself of those who, being duly warned, should prefer their own judgment to that of the first pastors. He endeavored above all to give to young people, only such masters as had openly declared their opinion; and to begin by an example calculated to make an impression, he dismissed one of the professors of St. Lazarus, because he found him to be one of those men of equivocal submission, who never explain themselves with embarrassment, except when faith is to be explained. He told another, who had through inadvertence expressed himself in a manner somewhat favorable to the innovators, that Jansenism was one of the most dangerous errors that had ever troubled the church, and that he could not thank God too much, for not having permitted its first defenders, who were his friends, and had taken inconceivable pains to seduce him, to succeed in their undertaking.

What the holy man did for his children, he did likewise for a great number of religious and secular communities of which he was the superior. It was thus that, as we have already observed, he prevailed upon the ladies of the Visitation to refuse a considerable sum, with which error would not have failed to insinuate itself amongst them. Thus it was also that he taught the Sisters of Charity, whose establishment was his favorite work, to be satisfied with lamenting the evils of the church, and to reduce all their science to that general submission which requires neither reasoning nor discussion. He infused the same sentiments into the secular congregations of Providence, of the Christian Union, of the New Catholics; and the first of these communities acknowledges to this day the greatest obligation it owes to St. Vincent of Paul, for having inspired its members, from the beginning, with a perfect submission to the church, and a profound respect for those who govern it.

Although the holy priest was not ignorant that in all ages error has counted amongst its defenders such men as Tertullian, Origen, Theodoret; yet he was more sensible to the fall of those who believed they were paying an homage to God by combating his church. It was for this reason that he labored so much

to bring back the famous Jean Deslions, dean of Senlis. He procured for him answers from Rome, and letters from the bishop of Pamiers. He saw him shaken several times. It even appeared that he deferred declaring himself more openly only to bring back the duke and duchess of Liancourt. But his engagements with Arnould detained him. He was ill requited for his complaisance, and every one knows that in the affair of Pérette Deslions, his niece, no one spared him less than Arnould.

I shall conclude this matter with a reply which the holy priest made to a pious individual who, being dazzled by the alms distributed by certain people of the party, made a scruple of condemning them. In a visit which he paid to Vincent, he asked him if there was no means of moderating the warmth, with which the gentlemen of Port Royal were persecuted. "Would it not be better," said he, "to come to an accommodation; they are disposed for it, if treated with more moderation, and there is no one better suited than you to mitigate the irritation on both sides, and to effect a good reconciliation."

Without stopping to reply, that, if the devil has his virgins and martyrs, he may well have persons who fast and give alms, Vincent went directly to the ground of the difficulty. His reply was, that when a difference is judged, there is no other agreement to make, than to submit to the judgment pronounced; that these gentlemen, who had taken the highest tone before the decree of the holy see, had labored since its publication only to elude it, even at the time when they pretended to submit to it; that in matters of faith all accommodation is reduced to a true and perfect obedience; and until the party should come to this, there was nothing to be done but to pray to God for their conversion.

Such was the language, such the conduct which Vincent of Paul held in the course of this unfortunate affair. He had feared all his life that some new error would arise in his time. The evil which he dreaded had arrived. He had the grief to see the most consoling dogmas of religion attacked by his friends. Flesh and blood never restrained him, and his zeal

did not hurry him away. He was not willing to judge rashly of any person, or through a charity ill understood, to judge favorably persons who should be considered as heretics or suspected of heresy. It is very remarkable that he never believed that a real Catholic could remain in a kind of indifference and neutrality.

Although he was much pleased to see the learned consecrate their time to the defence of truth, he always believed that prayer was the best remedy that could be opposed to heresy. He knew that, when nothing is required but writing, the most desperate innovators have never kept silent, and have given even to the worst systems an air and a color calculated to deceive. It was in God that Vincent put his confidence. He begged him, and he wished his friends to beg him, not to permit persons able to serve him to go astray, and that the faithful might not continue exposed to the efforts of the spirit of falsehood. He said that the best arms to fight against error, are prayer and the exact practice of the virtues opposed to the faults of those who support it; that we must oppose a profound humility to their self-esteem on account of their talents; a sincere love of contempt and abjection, to that frivolous praise which they lavish on each other; great uprightness and perfect simplicity of heart, to the artifices, disguise, imposture which they employ to cover their error and hide its deformity; in fine, ardent charity to the inflexible hatred and outrages with which they are accustomed to pursue those who oppose their opinions.

In spite of the trouble which the new heresy caused Vincent, he was able to continue the good works which had hitherto occupied him. Besides the mission at Rueil, at which he labored that same year as a man of forty years of age would have done, he kept up in the diocese of Paris alone four bands of apostolical men; and whilst in conformity with the wishes of the Propaganda, he consented to send for the third time some worthy priests into the Hebrides, he cultivated at Paris a numerous nursery of young Scotchmen, who were one day to perpetuate in their own country the good which those of his company could only commence.

But the most beautiful action that signalised his seventy-

eighth year, was without doubt the establishment which he made of an hospital for a great number of old persons. As this action, although considerable in itself, was still more so on account of its consequences, it will not be improper to enter into it somewhat more at length.

A citizen of Paris, who knew the prudence and charity of the holy priest, came to him in 1653, and told him that he felt himself interiorly urged to do something for the service of God; that in order not to resist a motion of the Holy Ghost, he had the intention to devote a considerable sum; that having nothing particular in view, he ratified beforehand the pious use which he might think proper to make of it: that the only condition he required of him was, that, wishing to be known to God alone, he should never be mentioned. This last article was promised at once, and it has been faithfully executed.

Vincent of Paul, after having consulted the Lord, thought that if a place could be established for the retreat of a number of poor mechanics, reduced in their old days to beggary, and forgetful of the affair of their salvation, it would be very pleasing to God. The benefactor liked the idea, but he required that the saint and his successors should take upon themselves the direction of this little establishment.

Without any delay Vincent purchased two houses and considerable ground in one of the suburbs of Paris. There he fitted up a small chapel, and furnished it with ornaments. As soon as all was ready, he received into this new retreat forty poor persons of both sexes. He placed them in two separate parts of the same building, but so well arranged that men and women all heard the same offices, and the same lecture at table, without seeing one another. He appointed Sisters of Charity to wait on them, and one of his priests to distribute to them the bread of life, and administer the sacraments. He was himself one of the first to instruct them, to recommend peace and union to them, form them to tender piety, lead them to bless with their dying breath the adorable hand which, in acknowledgment of its mercies, only asked of them the sacrifice of their last years.

When the house of the Name of Jesus, for this was the

title given it, had assumed a proper form, many of the ladies of the famous assembly of the holy priest, went to visit it. They wished to see every thing, examine every thing, and hear an account of every thing. The more they examined it, the more they were edified. Forty aged persons, who lived in the most perfect union, who knew nothing of murmuring or scandal, who, at the first sound of the bell, went to their little employments, and more willingly still to their exercises of piety, who all testified by their words, and sometimes by their tears, that they had never been so contented ; in a word, forty old people who had more the air of a religious community than of a dwelling of seculars, appeared very affecting and consoling in the eyes of faith. A comparison almost imperceptibly suggested itself between poor people so well regulated, and that multitude of vagabonds, without shame, without religion, who walk the streets of Paris, crowd the churches, and often with a sword at their side, demand alms in such a tone, as to leave to the liberality of the faithful but little merit. So much fervor on the one hand, such libertinism on the other, made a contrast which gave rise to many reflections.

One of the most important was, that it was necessary to engage Vincent of Paul, to do for all the poor found in the capital, what he had done for those of the Name of Jesus ; that God was visibly with him, and that provided he would put his hand to the work, it would succeed. The first ladies who had this thought, communicated it to others. It did not appear too much for persons who had served their apprenticeship in the school of the holy priest. They returned a second and a third time to the house of the Name of Jesus. They caused those who had not been there before to admire the order that reigned in it. The project which they had already formed, appeared more beautiful than ever. It was determined that on the first assembly they should propose it to the holy priest ; and they were so well assured that the thing was done, if he would only put his hand to it, that they thought of nothing but of persuading him to consent to it. At the very outset, one of the ladies promised fifty thousand livres, and another a revenue of three thousand livres.

However accustomed the servant of God was to great undertakings, the plan of a general hospital for an army of forty thousand beggars who were then in Paris, filled him with astonishment. He bestowed great praise upon those who had formed it, but he represented to them at the same time that an affair of such importance deserved to be maturely examined, and that it should be earnestly recommended to God. Eight days afterwards it was examined again. The deliberation did not last long. Not a voice voted in the negative, not even for a longer delay. The saint was obliged to yield to the torrent; and as it required an immense place for such a prodigious multitude of poor, he asked and obtained from the king the vast house of the Salpêtrière.

Such a happy commencement inspired courage, indeed almost more than was necessary. Some of the ladies, whose zeal was most active, would have wished every thing to be done in a day. The saint whose steps were marked by more discretion, thought it necessary to moderate an ardor which might insensibly introduce trouble and division into his assembly. To manage persons whose fault was an excess of good will, he saw them individually, and told them with that gravity, replete with mildness, against which well regulated souls never held out, that the works of God have their progress; that when he wished to save Noah and his family, he ordered him to construct an ark which might have been finished in a few months, the construction of which, however, took up a century; that he did not bring the children of Israel into the land of promise, but at the end of forty years; that to give a Redeemer to the world, he awaited the plenitude of time. From all these examples the holy man concluded, that they ought to go on leisurely, pray to God a great deal, act in concert, and be on their guard against the temptation to do every thing at once.

After having calmed their minds, he proposed his own idea to them; it was to make only a trial at first, to limit themselves in the beginning to one or two hundred poor persons, and only to take those who should of their own accord ask to be received. He added that people who would find them-

selves well treated, would induce others to come to share their good fortune, and that then the number would increase in proportion as Providence would augment their funds. Thus thought Vincent, and he thought correctly. He was soon obliged to temporise himself, perhaps more than he would have wished.

As, after much reflection, it was discovered that an affair of such importance could not be carried into execution without the authority of the magistrates, it was resolved to present to the parliament the letters patent of the king, and cause them to be registered. In great bodies, as elsewhere, every one has his own way of considering things. There were judges of weight to be found, who, struck by the great number of vagabonds wandering through the streets, and embarrassed by the difficulty of placing all these vile and audacious characters under the same roof, looked upon this project, as a beautiful and chimerical speculation. All the prudence of Vincent of Paul, all the zeal of the ladies of his assembly, all the credit of the first president, Pompone de Bellièvre, were necessary to surmount this unexpected obstacle. After many conferences the matter was settled. But it was resolved, against the first opinion of the holy priest, that all the beggars should be obliged, either to labor for their support, or to enter the Salpetrière, which from that time took the name of General Hospital. The greater part of those men, who were enemies to order, retired into the provinces; and of that class of people accustomed to do nothing, there were only, as Vincent had foreseen, four or five thousand who profited by the good will manifested towards them.

It was, however, a great consolation for the servant of God and for his assembly, to see this great work sustained by public authority. He mentioned it to a confidential person, and there is nothing wanting to his recital but what could redound to his own glory. He did not say that it was himself who gave occasion to the first idea of this glorious undertaking, who removed the principal difficulties, who got the necessary articles of furniture made by the laborers of his house, and who found so many resources in the ladies of the assem-

bly, only because he had taught them for nearly twenty years, to attempt what seemed impossible, and to succeed in it.

The king, by the advice of the duchess of Aiguillon, had confided the spiritual direction of this great hospital to the missionaries. Vincent of Paul, after deliberating on it with his priests, renounced it by an authentic act. But lest his refusal might stop the work of God, he gave it in charge to one of the most wise ecclesiastics of his conference, who, by prudent missions, spread gradually throughout it the spirit of order and penance.

It was thus that Vincent executed in Paris what St. Chrysostom had formerly tried in vain for the city of Constantinople; what Henry IV had unsuccessfully projected; and what Mary of Médicis would have considered one of the most splendid monuments of her regency, could she have executed it in a solid and permanent manner.* In order to do justice to some of those who, after Louis XIV, had the greatest share in this prodigious establishment, we will add that Cardinal Mazarin contributed to it one hundred thousand livres in one day, and sixty thousand livres at his death, and that Mr. de Pomponne, who at first gave to it twenty thousand crowns, bequeathed still more by his will.

Whilst the institutor of the mission labored with so much ardor to procure the glory of God, God labored, it would appear, to purify him more and more by sufferings and afflictions.

Without speaking of the impotent fury of a crowd of beggars, who preferred a wandering and dissolute life to the honest retreat which the holy man had procured for them, and who broke out in abusive language against him, he experienced in the space of two years and a half very considerable losses by the death of several excellent subjects of his congregation, whom various diseases carried off one after another in Madagascar, in Poland, and in France. He found himself defamed, in a manner, by a young German Lutheran, who, in the dress of a missionary, which he had purloined,

* Mary of Médicis began in 1612 a sort of General Hospital, but it only subsisted six years.

went to the meeting house of Charenton, and gave the honor of his conquest to the minister Drelincourt. He was obliged to withdraw from Rome those of his priests who were Frenchmen, because they had given, by order of Innocent X, an honorable retreat to Cardinal de Retz, to whom Mazarin was pleased to show that his power could be felt beyond the Alps. A short time afterwards, he had the grief to learn that a man, whom he had sent into England to visit his brethren from whom he had received no news, had been obliged to escape by flight the pursuit of Cromwell; that three others whom he had despatched to Madagascar, far from being able to reach it, had only escaped perishing with their ship, through a singular protection of God; and that one of his company, who performed the functions of consul at Algiers, was daily exposed to perish in torments.

It is true that God sometimes tempered this bitterness with a share of consolation; and that our saint had that of seeing some of his children solidly established at Genoa through the beneficence of the illustrious Marquis de Pianezze, his institute confirmed by Alexander VII, with a prohibition against taking solemn vows, and, what perhaps affected him more, a brave and virtuous nobility, guided by his advice, and animated by the example of Marquis de Fénélon and of the intrepid Marshal Fabert, renouncing all duelling by an oath taken with much solemnity in the seminary of Saint-Sulpice. But these moments of joy passed quicker than the rays of the sun in winter. An item of favorable information was accompanied by twenty occurrences which could not but afflict him. The pestilence which began to desolate Italy, and threatened more than other persons, priests as laborious as his were, made him tremble for them: and soon the reality of the evil succeeded to the alarm. It is true that God divided his victims; but if he was pleased to spare him whose loss would have been most sensibly felt by the holy man,* it must be acknowledged that his mercies cost him very dear. Of eight priests at Genoa, that is

* This was Mr. Edme Joly, of whom the saint had predicted to the duchess of Aigillon, that he would be one day superior general of the congregation.

to say, of eight apostles whose labors had so often moved Cardinal Durazzo to tears, death removed seven in less than twenty days, and there remained only one who returned as soon as he got well to the service of the sick. In giving this information to his community, the saint afflicted them as much as he was afflicted himself. But as his love was greater still than his grief, he taught his companions rather to bless Him who is and will always be, than to regret those who were no more.

He blessed him himself by such assiduous labor, that it cannot be conceived how he bore it at such an advanced age. We have but a very small portion of the letters which he wrote in France, to Barbary, and to more distant countries : yet those we have are so numerous, that we are terrified at their multitude and the variety of matters upon which he was obliged to write. Here it is a bishop, an abbé of great rank, a director who consult him on delicate and important matters. There princesses who ask him either for missions for their territories, an aid which he never refused, or permission to visit the monasteries of which he was superior, a permission which he almost always withheld. At one time, it is the congregation of the Propaganda which conjures him to send some of his children to Grand Cairo ; at another, it is Mr. de la Meilleraie, who, after some coolness asks them for foreign countries. One day, it is an afflicted mother who from the extremity of the kingdom where his charity had made her acquainted with him, begs him to interest himself for a son, who, being a captive in Algiers, is in danger of losing his life or his faith ; another day, it is a renegade, who addresses him from Algiers, to discover in his charity the means of repairing his apostasy. To-day, it is an abbess, who discouraged at the difficulties of governing, knows not what to do ; to-morrow, it will be a young lady, who after some months of noviciate, is tempted to go back. Often it is the nuncios Bagrin and Piccolomini, who wish to have, by word or letter, his advice upon some difficult points which relate either to the particular advantage of some diocess, or to the general good of the church : more frequently it is some good

religious who have recourse to him, as to a father always ready to aid them, either in the reformation of their orders, or in other affairs almost as difficult. In the morning, it will be the illustrious house de la Mothe Fénélon, to whom he predicts, to prevent opposition to a marriage, that it will give birth to a son* who will be the glory of his name; in the evening, and there is no exaggeration in all this, it will be the head of a great company, coming to concert with him some of those judgments, which policy may disapprove, but which equity and religion will always acknowledge. Sometimes it is a missionary who needs being encouraged or brought back to his original fervor; at other times, virtuous priests who know neither relief nor repose, and whose zeal must be moderated in order that it may last longer.

As long as he lived, the house of Saint-Lazarus was always what the house of the Seeing was in the time of the judges of Israel. It was like an emporium, whither every person who had the intention of doing some good work flocked from Paris and the provinces, to derive from the counsels of the man of God the light of which they stood in need. Besides the conferences of his own house, of the ecclesiastics, and of the ladies of his assembly which amounted to five every week, he was often called to the deliberations of prelates, doctors, superiors of communities, either to put a stop to some disorder, or to establish good government. So that, excepting the time which he gave every year to his spiritual retreat, he went out almost every day, sometimes even twice a day, for the affairs of charity, which tore him from his solitude. As soon as he returned to the house, after having recited his office on his knees, a practice which he never omitted until his infirmities compelled him to do so, he listened with admirable patience to those within or from without who had business with him. If to his great and serious occupations we join those given him by the different houses of his congregation, those of the Sisters of Charity, and the ladies of the Visitation, who, until the day of his death, would never

* Mr. de Fénélon, archbishop of Cambray. It was from a lady of his family that we learned this prediction.

have any other superior, can we help acknowledging that his years were full, and that with him there were none of those vacant months condemned by the scripture.

That which always gave a great price to the labors of our saint, was the peace and confidence which accompanied them. At the time when death deprived him of so many virtuous priests, he always calculated that Providence would be pleased to replace them by others who would be worthy of them; and heaven did not disappoint his expectations. Italy furnished him an internal seminary, which under the direction of Mr. Joli was a nursery of apostolical men. That of Paris was always well filled. Vincent even received into it towards the close of his life some subjects, who although incapable of performing the functions of his company on account of their advanced age, proved the esteem which the great ones of the world had for it. The first was Charles d'Angennes, ancient count of la Rochepot, brother-in-law of Madame de Gondi, who had been formerly ambassador in Spain. This gentleman, who found in the simplicity of our saint a light which the most brilliant portion of the world does not possess, not being able to obtain of him his reception as a boarder, placed himself amongst his children, and continued to edify them greatly to the time of his death. The second was René Almeras, the father of the second superior general of the congregation. This respectable old man, the head of an illustrious family, and eighty years of age, forced Vincent of Paul by his importunity to receive him into his congregation. His sacrifice did not last long; and God granted him at the end of twenty-two months the recompense which he has promised to those who become children through the love of him. The third was Louis de la Rochechouard, abbot of Tournus, so well known by the name of Mr. de Chandénier. As he only took the habit of the mission on the eve of his death, and as that death was for our saint one of those great trials by which God disposed him to sanctify his own, we shall speak of it more at length hereafter.

Vincent rendered himself worthy of so many graces, by the exact practice of that virtue which costs human nature

the most. His house suffered, and he was forgetting its wants, to occupy himself with those of the daughters of Providence, whom the death of their pious foundress would soon have annihilated, if, by a letter in which he used the pious artifice found in that of St. Paul to Philemon, he had not interested in their favor the duchesses of Liancour and Aiguillon.

After all, this noble disinterestedness, this spirit of liberality, which so many lessons cannot teach to the rich of the world, was, as it were, the basis of the disposition of our holy priest. He was often accused of carrying it to an excess. Far from opposing, as some of his friends begged him to do, the establishment of some new companies, the rules of which were in some measure copied from his own, he offered to abandon the very name which the ecclesiastical and civil powers had given to his congregation, because these companies wished to appropriate it to themselves, which might have been a source of confusion, disputes, and scandal. He was on the point of making, the following year, a sacrifice no less generous. It is well known that the mission of Madagascar had cost him a great deal, both in money and subjects. It is not less known, that he had not engaged in it of his own accord. The company carrying on the trade with that part of Africa, had urged him to it; Cardinal Bagny, who was then nuncio in France, had begged him to make that new effort for religion; the congregation of the Propaganda had authorised it; and he had just incurred new expenses for the only one of his priests who was left in that land. It was in these circumstances, that he found himself on the point of being dispossessed of that mission. Marshal de la Meilleraie, who had got himself substituted to the ancient company, thought that Vincent betrayed his interests; and, as on occasions of rivalry, to have pleased one party is almost a reason for displeasing the other, the report was spread abroad that this gentleman, to exclude the priests of the mission, had made arrangements with the Capuchins, and that on the first voyage he would send twenty-four of them to the island of Saint Lawrence.

The holy priest was not without resources. He had credit at court: he was respected in Rome, which does not like to have his work overturned. He could at least represent his rights and titles to those whom they wished to send in the place of his priests, and who, as they were full of equity, would have been the first to acknowledge that those who had sowed, should reap the harvest. He did, however, nothing of all this. "If the marshal prefers these good religious," said he in a letter to one of his company, "I shall recall ours from Madagascar. Our maxim is always to give place to others, believing that they will do better than we." It must be acknowledged that this philosophy, if it ever could be in vogue, would spare the public and the church many scandalous scenes.

Vincent was not obliged to make the sacrifice which he meditated, and which would have exempted him from many others much more severe. La Meilleraie, either having got rid of his prejudices, or being persuaded that his proceeding would do him no honor, informed Vincent of the day of embarkation. The saint sent him four of his priests, upon whose virtue and zeal he greatly calculated. But the vessel experienced, the day after sailing, such a violent storm, that they were all, during eight days, on the verge of destruction. At last, having refitted at Lisbon, they again set sail: but soon afterwards they were attacked and captured by the Spaniards; and it was only after a sort of captivity that the missionaries were released in Galicia, and succeeded in returning to France.

Whilst the servant of God formed such unsuccessful projects for the salvation of Madagascar, he made for the sanctification of the people of Metz preparations which had a happier result. The court being in that city in 1657, Ann of Austria saw with grief that God was not well served there, and that there were abuses which required reformation. On her return to Paris she told our saint, that having witnessed the good results of the missions, she intended to have one made at Metz. Vincent, instead of his priests, whom the laws of his institute did not allow him to employ for missions in large towns, when others could be found, chose out of the

great number of those who formed his conference, forty ecclesiastics of merit and good will. He placed at their head the Abbé de Tournus, a man whose name and virtues were of a happy presage. But a general and awful inundation gave to the pious band and to him who sent them, the most serious uneasiness. Twenty days elapsed without his receiving any news of them. At length he learned that they had reached their destination. He blessed God for it with the persuasion that his mercy having been pleased to preserve them, they would labor efficaciously for his glory. He was not deceived. The mission of Metz succeeded perfectly, and the queen, to whom the Abbé de Tournus gave an account of the labors and success of the mission, was so much edified that she resolved to establish the priests of St. Vincent in that city, that they might do at least in the country, what they could not do elsewhere, except in case of necessity

The servant of God, during the inundation of which we have just spoken, rendered for the third time to the village of Genevilliers a service similar to that which we have described more at large. He had some time before relieved the necessities of the inhabitants of Boulogne in Picardy. Shortly afterwards, he sent a band of Sisters of Charity to the aid of five or six hundred soldiers, who had been transported to Calais, after the famous battle of the Dunes : but were we to detail all the good he did or caused to be done, we should never finish.

There is, however, one good work, which he did this same year, which essentially belongs to his history. I mean the rules which he at length gave to his congregation. It had been established more than thirty years, and as yet had no written rules. It is true that his companions had heretofore found in him a perfect model : but this model could not last much longer ; and it was proper to prevent, by clear and precise regulations, the very shadow of the doubts to which the restlessness of the human mind might thereafter give birth. Vincent, notwithstanding his great occupations, thought of it daily, and he thought of it solidly. Although three or four hours' reading would be sufficient to peruse entirely the con-

stitutions he gave to his company, there are discovered in them maxims so wise, means so well proportioned to the end, such sure ways of arriving at Christian and sacerdotal perfection, such efficacious remedies against the corruption of the world, such prudent counsels for the sanctification of the people, that a great bishop to whom our saint made a present of them, carried them always about him, as the most beautiful abridgment that could be made of the Gospel.

The principle with which he sets out is, that the little congregation of the mission purposes, as much as is in its power, to take Jesus Christ for a model: he concludes from this, that after the example of that divine Saviour, its members must do and teach; labor first for their own sanctification; then announce the gospel to the poor, and above all to those of the country; at last, aid the ministers of the Son of God in acquiring the science and virtues proper to their state.

To attain this threefold end, the wise founder requires that his children should be attached to our Lord's maxims, to his poverty, his obedience, his charity for the infirm, his modesty, his manner of living, acting, treating the neighbors, his conduct in the functions which he fulfilled with regard to the people. He desires above all that simplicity, humility, mildness, mortification, zeal for the salvation of souls, should be, as it were, the seal of his congregation, and that each of their actions should bear its impress. To these virtues he joins those of which the Son of God made use to combat the devil and overthrow his empire, that poverty which did not afford him a place of rest, that perfect purity which even envy never attacked, that obedience which led him to die, and to die upon the cross.

Vincent resumes these three last virtues, and treats of them at some length. Although those of his congregation, forming only a secular body, cannot be deprived of their right to their property, he directs them to live as if they possessed none. In their furniture there must be nothing curious, nothing superfluous.

With regard to chastity, a virtue so much the more necessary to the priests of the mission, as they are exposed, by

their calling to many dangerous occasions, he enjoins the most severe precautions. It is not sufficient for him that they should possess that virtue in a certain degree above mediocrity, he requires that they should be out of the reach of the slightest suspicion, being persuaded that a suspicion alone, however unjust, would do more injury to the congregation, than the idea of any other crime with which calumny could charge it.

As to obedience, the saint gives it a more extended object. The pope, the bishops, the superiors of the company, must rely upon a ready, holy, reasonable docility. If there be reasons for thinking differently from those who govern, they are to be exposed with simplicity, and the remonstrants are not to think hard, when their observations are not acquiesced in.

A man so full of charity has not omitted the sick. Servants, strangers, and above all the poor in the missions, must be visited, consoled, edified, relieved, both for soul and body. If the infirmarian has his rules, there are some also for the sick. The bed of pain upon which they lie, is a pulpit from which they must preach at least by example, patience, and entire submission to those who are appointed to take care of them. These must use every endeavor to give proofs of a prompt and ardent charity.

Although in all this there is nothing which the holy canons do not prescribe to ecclesiastics who do not live in community, the servant of God was too well acquainted with human weakness, to hope that, without a special grace, a road of itself painful to nature could be long persevered in. To obtain this precious grace, Vincent prescribes a number of pious exercises calculated to obtain that spirit which gives and preserves life. His children must make every day in common an hour of mental prayer, confess at least once a week; the priests must celebrate every day, if nothing prevents them; those who do not, must receive communion on Sundays and festivals; all must read a chapter of the New Testament, and make a spiritual lecture; give every year eight days to a spiritual retreat; have a spiritual director; adore by frequent acts of faith the unspeakable mysteries of the Trinity and In-

carnation ; honor with particular veneration the august sacrament of our altars ; have a tender devotion to the queen of virgins.

The saint concludes by proposing to his brethren sure means of sanctifying the functions of their state of life. He desires that, at the beginning of each action, and above all, those which are most important, they should propose to themselves nothing but to please God alone ; that they should stifle even the first risings of a desire to satisfy themselves or please men ; that when they have been any ways successful, they should renounce that vain complacency which affords aliment to self-love ; that when unsuccessful, they should humble themselves without being discouraged. After any public action, he equally disapproves of praise which flatters pride, and indiscreet censure which discourages uselessly. Simplicity, the first of the five virtues which constitute the spirit of the congregation, must shine particularly in the discourses addressed to the people, and even to the ecclesiastics. They must be free from those soft and studied expressions, those far-fetched thoughts, those vain subtilities which the Saviour never employed, and which his first disciples held in horror. The holy founder insists on what is true and solid throughout. He wishes neither mere opinions, nor singular ways, nor vain curiosity ; still less the ambition to excel others. Each of his company should wish with Moses that all were prophets, become participant in the good done by other companies, by the joy which he ought to feel at their success, rejoice at being despised, whilst they are loaded with praise. If, with all this, a missionary should be more tenderly attached to his own state than to any other, it is because a good son loves his mother, although covered with rags, more than the most beautiful princess in the universe.

Such is an abridgment of the constitutions or rules of the institutor of the mission. Although written with simplicity, they have in the original a character of light and unction, of which a summary is incapable. Vincent of Paul, before distributing them, represented to his companions, that, although the congregation had been established nearly thirty-three years,

there had as yet been no written rules, because precipitation in this matter would have been subject to many serious inconveniences; that it had been proper to try by long experience what would suit and what would not; that if God had been pleased to make use of the company to effect some good in the church, it was only because they had preserved the order and customs prescribed in the constitutions which he now placed in their hands. "What then remains for me to do?" continued he, "but to imitate Moses, who, after having given the law of God to the people, promised every kind of blessings to those who would observe it. Give yours, O Lord, to this little book; accompany it with the unction of your spirit, that it may operate in the souls of those who read it, estrangement from the world, the practice of virtue, and union with you."

Vincent pronounced this discourse in a moderate tone of voice, but with so much meekness and humility, that the feelings of his heart were communicated to the hearts of those who listened to him. The assistant of the house having cast himself at his feet, to beg him to bless the company once more, the saint exclaimed with redoubled affection and tenderness; "O Lord! who art the eternal and immaculate law, who dost govern the whole universe by thy infinite wisdom; thou, from whom all laws and regulations for living well emanate as from their source, be pleased to bless those to whom thou hast given these rules. Give them, O Lord, the grace necessary to observe them inviolably until death. It is with that confidence, and in your name that, miserable sinner that I am, I am going to pronounce the words of benediction."

Thus ended this day, which the man of God must have considered one of the most beautiful of his life. Whatever desire he had to die, to be with Jesus Christ, he had always feared being taken away before his congregation had a form of government which could be no more changed. If his frequent infirmities made him run the risk of leaving his work incomplete, it was that he had for a constant maxim to advance towards what was better, when not absolutely obliged to be satisfied with what was good.

In consequence of having seen in the life of our saint, sufferings following so close upon consolations, we are almost ready to expect that the joy which he experienced at seeing his institute cemented as well as it could be, would be soon mingled with bitterness. It was, in fact, a short time after, troubled by one of the most unfortunate affairs of his life. The fact will not detain us long; but here as elsewhere, the sentiments of Vincent of Paul deserve all our attention.

We have said more than once, that he had great regard for the former prior of St. Lazarus. The latter took advantage of it, to engage him in an affair to which he had a great repugnance. A proposition had been made to him for two years of a life annuity; but the annuity was so great, and the times so bad, that Vincent would not listen to it. Mr. Le Bon, at the solicitation of the interested parties, caused him to change his mind; and the saint signed the contract, after having consulted persons of experience who assured him he had nothing to fear. Never did property cost him dearer; he paid punctually the rent stipulated in the agreement; and caused considerable improvements to be made on the property which he had acquired. He saw it more than once reaped by the *Fronde*, just as he was on the point of gathering the fruits; and to complete his misfortune, after the death of the one who sold it, he was deprived of it by a judgment.

It is seldom we meet with a man, who, when a stroke of the pen deprives him of fifty thousand livres in his most pressing necessity, remains as calm as if he had obtained them. It is still more rare for him to continue to possess himself, when on one hand he has every thing to fear from the adverse party, and on the other he finds a division of sentiment with regard to the judgment given against him. But that which is but seldom met with amongst the rest of men, was abundantly found in our holy priest. On the first news which he received of the loss of his suit, he begged Mr. de Bordes, auditor of the chamber of accounts, a man who had always loved the congregation, to unite with it in thanking God for the favor he had just done it, in visiting it by so sensible a trial. He inspired with the same feelings many of his

friends who conjured him to right himself by a civil petition, and one of whom, though in other respects not prodigal, would take upon himself the expenses of the new proceeding. Above all he tried to inspire his children with the spirit of submission with which he was filled. "It is you, O my God," said he in one of his conferences, where his simplicity aided by his unction gained every heart; "it is you who have pronounced the sentence; it shall be irrevocable; and that the execution of it may not be deferred, we now make a sacrifice of this property, and of all that we possess to your divine majesty. O my brethren!" continued he, "if it pleased God that this temporal loss should be recompensed by an increase of confidence in his providence, abandonment to his guidance, detachment from the things of earth, renunciation of ourselves, how happy should we be! I presume to hope that his paternal goodness will grant us this favor."

The loss of a considerable revenue afflicted the holy missionaries less than their fear of losing their holy institutor. He had now passed that term, when, according to the expression of the royal prophet, life is naught but pain and infirmity. To a swelling of the legs, of which he had an attack at a less advanced age, were added ulcers, which, followed by a slow fever, excited fears for him. It appears that he was one of the first to condemn himself. At least he took the precautions of a man who calculates no longer upon life. His first care was to write to the Rev. Father de Gondi and to the Cardinal de Retz, his son. He gives them the most humble thanks for all that he had received from them. He asks pardon for the pains which a man so rude as he pretends to be, could not fail to give them. He assures the father and son that if God, in his infinite mercy, is pleased to give him a place in his kingdom, he will redouble his prayers for them and for their illustrious family. The cardinal in his time experienced the efficacy of his prayers. After having a long time wandered through the neighboring kingdoms, where the hand of God and that of the king pursued him, he was at length so alarmed at the irregularity of his former conduct, that he would have renounced the Roman purple, had not the

pope and the sacred college been opposed to it. He sold his land of Commerci to liquidate a part of his debts, and paid three millions of them. As penitent as a solitary, he wished to be treated in the refectory of Saint-Mihiel as a simple religious. A general acknowledgment of his faults, which he confided to the breast of an enlightened director, was one of the first steps which he took to return to God; and that step was followed by a great many others which cannot be suspected. Happy was he to have been able towards the end of his life to remember the important lessons which Vincent of Paul had given him during his infancy, and to acknowledge at last that the frivolous phantom of glory, after which he had so long run, was nothing but vanity before God, and affliction of spirit before men. The same happened, but much sooner, with the celebrated Armand Jean le Bouthilier de Rancé, who, in the retreat which he made at St. Lazarus under the direction of the servant of God, conceived an idea of privation and perfection which astonished his age, and which future ages, if Christian, will never be tired of admiring. But let us return to our history.

The holy priest did not recover perfect health; we shall see that the rest of his life was but a train of sufferings; but God gave him sufficient strength to do many things which should not be forgotten.

He had for a year procured a considerable sum for a Capuchin Father, who had come from mount Libanus to Paris, to seek a remedy for the vexation which the Maronite Christians experienced from the Turks.

This affair, which was a long time and maturely discussed, was not yet finished when another, no less important, arose. The waters of Sainte-Reine, and the frequent miracles which God works at the tomb of that illustrious martyr, drew thither from Burgundy and many other provinces, a great number of poor, who came to seek the cure of their disorders. Vincent learned from a pious citizen, named Des Noyers, that these unfortunate people, reduced to the necessity of sleeping in a barn, or upon the pavements of the streets, died deprived almost as much of spiritual as of corpo

ral aid. He saw very well that a large hospital would be a great resource, but he saw at the same time that this project, uselessly formed by the Baron de Renty at a less unpropitious time, would be very difficult of execution in a time of war and storms. However, after having spoken much concerning it with God, who was always his first oracle, he confirmed Des Noyers in the plan he had formed of undertaking it. But he warned him to be patient, because he would have violent assaults to sustain, even from those who would support him. The event justified the prediction. Envy and false policy crossed the work of God. But, by means of a hundred thousand livres which Vincent procured, it was happily terminated; and the following year the pilgrims began to lodge in it. More than twenty thousand pass there yearly; and those who, by entering into the Piscina, thought only of recovering transient health, have more than once recovered that which is infinitely more precious. It is upon this ground that, when Gabriel de Roquette, bishop of Autun, wrote to Clement XI for the beatification of the servant of God, he assured that pontiff, that Vincent of Paul had rendered two important services to his diocese, one by using the credit which he had in the ecclesiastical council to establish reform in the celebrated abbey of Benedictines at Autun, the other in procuring for the pilgrims of Sainte-Reine an hospital, for the want of which a great number had perished every year.

As the holy priest saw that his death could no longer be very distant, one of his cares was to inspire those who could protect religion and the poor, with the feelings which God had given him on these two great objects. It was with this view, that he wrote to the queen of Poland to felicitate her on the services she had herself rendered to the sick in the hospitals, and that, to prolong the life of Cardinal Durazzo and of the bishop of Toulon, who were wearing themselves out by immoderate labors, he begged them to spare their health for the good of religion, which calculated upon finding in them what she had just lost in the holy bishop of Cahors.*

* M. Alain de Solminihac who died in odor of sanctity, on the 3rd of December, 1659.

Finally, it was for this reason that, to promote in the person of St. Francis of Sales the honor of one of the most beautiful models that the priesthood ever had, he wrote in favor of his beatification a letter in which each word is an eulogy, and each eulogy an homage to the truth.

Hitherto he had lived in such a manner as to deserve, that the same eulogy should be one day given to him that had just been given to his former friend. God, who wished to add to his crown that of the most heroic patience, was pleased to make of Vincent of Paul, during the last years of his pilgrimage, a victim to pains and afflictions. To arrest the course of a fever which returned very often, he was obliged, during the greatest heat of summer, to make of his chamber a kind of sweating room. Then there was no rest for him, no sleep, no truce to the agitation produced by almost stifling heat. His mattress, his sheets, his quilt were all soaked. The day which succeeded such bad nights did not indemnify him; he did not repair by any voluntary repose that which he had lost. At last, the affliction in his legs became so great, that to bear it required all the patience of the saints. Ulcers were formed in them; during the day a stream of watery matter flowed from them, which, stopping in the joints during the night, caused him redoubled pains, the continuance and violence of which consumed him by degrees. In so painful a situation, which, however, did not prevent him for a considerable time from rising at four o'clock in the morning, making his meditation with his community, nor from presiding at the ecclesiastical conferences which were held every Tuesday; nor sometimes from the meetings of the ladies of his assembly, who preferred to go from one end of Paris to the other, rather than be deprived of the consolation of hearing him; in this situation, I say, the holy man had no need of new trials. But because he was just, it was necessary for him to be filled with tribulations. In less than four months death carried off from him four persons who were the support and consolation of his old age.

Antoine Portail, a priest of real merit, profound humility, exemplary charity, and who, united with our saint for nearly fifty years, aided him on numberless occasions, was

the first of whom God required the sacrifice. His death was followed, one month after, by that of Madame Le Gras. She had always feared lest she could not be assisted by her pious director in her last moments; and so it happened, for when she was attacked by her last sickness, Vincent was no longer able to be up. But one of the severest crosses which our saint had to bear in the course of his last year, was the loss of the Abbé de Tournus. This worthy nephew of Cardinal de la Rochefoucault had such a tender affection for the man of God, he had rendered such important services to the congregation, that they could not refuse him a small apartment in the house of St. Lazarus. He lived there with Abbé de Moutier-Saint-Jean, his brother, in the practice of the most austere virtue. For a long time he had conjured Vincent of Paul to receive him into the number of his children; but his birth and reputation, titles which elsewhere would have facilitated his object, constituted an almost invincible obstacle to his desires. It was only at the last extremity that his perseverance forced the barriers which virtue opposed even to virtue. Having fallen sick at Chambery, he received the habit of the congregation from a missionary who had accompanied him to Rome. This little change of condition filled him with a holy joy, and he praised God for it to his last breath. Vincent rendered, and caused to be rendered to the illustrious deceased all the duties prescribed by piety and gratitude. He recommended him to the prayers of all his houses, as a benefactor and a missionary. His body was brought from Savoy to the church of St. Lazarus. The example of his virtues still lives, and his memory will always be in benediction there.

So many severe, and closely succeeding blows, did not satisfy the justice of Him whose penetrating eye discovers what is weak in the most beautiful works. Our saint found himself in danger of again losing the first man of his congregation, René Almeras, son of that good old man, who, as we have said, became a missionary and died a seminarist. God at last restored him to his prayers; and after a long and serious illness by which he was attacked at Richelieu, he had

him brought to Paris in a litter. It was time for him to arrive, three days afterwards Vincent died.

The state in which we left this worthy priest, before entering upon the recital of the crosses which he experienced in his last year, showed evidently enough that the end of his course was drawing near. Although on the score of his mind and natural qualities, no decay nor alteration was perceptible; although those from without and within found him at all hours of the day with a serene countenance, with that tone of voice, those manners, replete with mildness, which evince perfect tranquillity; although by a sort of prodigy, of which, taking his situation in view, there are few examples, he still governed from his retirement his company, that of the Sisters of Charity, and a great number of communities of which he was the superior, with as much presence of mind as if he had been in the days of his best health; yet it was evident that he could not last long. The information reached Italy, and whilst Alexander VII, to spare a person so dear to the church, dispensed him by an apostolical brief from the recitation of the breviary, Cardinals Durazzo, archbishop of Genoa, Ludovizio, the grand penitentiary, and Bagni, formerly nuntio in France, wrote him separately to beg him to moderate his labors. These letters, and the favor of the pope, arrived only after his death. It was discovered by chance that, for eighteen years he had prepared himself daily to render his account to the Great Judge, in case he should be pleased to call him. To dispose himself more immediately for it in his last sickness, he recited every day after mass the prayers for those in their agony, and he at length found himself on the eve of reaping the fruits of them. On the 25th of September, 1660, towards midday, the drowsiness caused by a want of sleep, became heavier than usual. Notwithstanding this, he heard mass the following day, which was a Sunday, and received the communion as he had done every day, since he was unable to celebrate. As soon as he was in his chamber, his drowsiness returned. He was awakened several times. Always like himself, the virtuous sick man answered with a smiling and affable countenance. But his

tongue soon refused its office to the tender emotions of his heart; after a few words it was silent. At these alarming prognostics, the physician recommended extreme unction.

Then it was that his children knew without any doubt, that they were on the point of losing the best of fathers. They hastened to profit by his last moments; one of them begged his blessing for all the rest. The holy man made an effort to raise his head; he cast upon the missionary a look full of kindness and tenderness, and having commenced aloud the words of benediction, finished them in a voice so low as to be scarcely audible.

He passed the night in a sweet and almost continual application to God. When he dozed more than they would have wished, it was sufficient, to awaken him, to mention the name of his Divine Master. He appeared to be particularly fond of those words so suitable to the condition of a dying man: "Incline unto my aid, O God!" and he immediately answered by those which follow: "O Lord! make haste to help me."

About a quarter after four in the morning, an ecclesiastic of the Tuesday conference, who was then making his annual retreat in the house, having learned that the sight of the saint was failing, entered his room and begged him to bless his brethren for the last time, that the company might not degenerate. Vincent contented himself by answering with his usual humility: "*Qui cœpit opus bonum, ipse perficiet.*" Shortly afterwards, he expired like a lamp which has no more oil; and without fever, without effort, without the least convulsion he gave up to God one of the most beautiful souls that ever existed. It was at the hour when his spiritual children commenced their meditation; that is to say, at the very moment on which during forty years he had invoked the Holy Spirit upon himself and his companions. His countenance did not change, and his body remained as pliable as it had been before. The surgeons who opened him, reasoned a great deal upon a bone which had been formed in his spleen, and which did not a little resemble an ivory counter. Many persons who had studied the servant of God closely, attributed this unusual production to the violence which he did himself,

to combat a severe and melancholy disposition which he naturally possessed.

He remained exposed on Tuesday, the 28th of September, 1660, until midday. His obsequies were honored by the presence of the Prince of Conti, the archbishop of Cesarea, nuncio of the pope, many prelates and a great number of ecclesiastics, regulars, and seculars, of different orders. The duchess of Aiguillon, who was of his assembly, was there also, and with her many gentlemen and ladies of distinguished birth. The people and the poor, for whom he had done so much, ran thither in crowds. His heart was enclosed in a silver vase, and his body was interred in the middle of the choir, with this epitaph, which corresponds with the simplicity of the father and the children.

Hic jacet venerabilis vir Vincentius
A Paulo, Presbyter, Fundator, seu Institutor,
Et primus Superior Generalis Congregationis
Missionis, necnon Puellarum Charitatis.
Obiit die 27 Septembris anni 1660, ætatis
Vero suæ 85.

The death of this great man afflicted the most virtuous people of the whole kingdom. Never perhaps, from the throne to the poorest of the nation, were the suffrages so unanimous. The queen-mother exclaimed that the church and the poor had met with a great loss. Mr. Piccolomini, nuncio in France, made use of the same expressions, and they were those which arose most naturally in the public mind. The queen of Poland, the marquis of Pianeza, the illustrious first president, Mr. Lamoignon, the bishops of Pamiers and Aleth, and numberless others, spoke in the same manner. The prince of Conti, whose judgment was very correct, pronounced this beautiful eulogium of the deceased: "I have never known a person in whom there appeared so great humility, so great a detachment, such generosity of heart as in Mr. Vincent. The church has lost in him a man filled with every virtue, and above all, a charity which reached every where." Even those who did not like him, spoke like the rest; and a writer, who, under pretext of pronouncing

His eulogy, endeavors to diminish his glory, does not hesitate to acknowledge that "the piety of this virtuous priest was extraordinary;" that "kindness, simplicity, uprightness, charity, and other virtues, are gifts which every one knows he possessed." He looks upon him, and we also look upon him, as a man whose public reputation is so well established, that it will be sufficient, in the course of ages, "to destroy every thing that envy or calumny may advance against him."

Although all were persuaded that this worthy priest of Jesus Christ had, on leaving this world, found a place of peace and refreshment, yet as the first of the apostles teaches us that even the just are saved with difficulty, the victim of propitiation for the sins of the world, was offered for him in every direction. A multitude of priests, secular and religious, of communities, even of cathedrals, paid him this duty of charity and gratitude. The celebrated metropolis of Rheims, which was indebted to him for the numberless benefits conferred upon Champagne, was among the first to show him this mark of gratitude. But the ecclesiastics of his conference distinguished themselves in this point, as well as in others. They performed in the church of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, a solemn funeral service. Henry de Maupas du Tour, who was then bishop of Puy, and afterwards of Evreux, delivered the funeral oration. His auditory was composed of a great number of prelates, ecclesiastics, religious, and an incredible number of people. The orator, who had known the saint perfectly, spoke of him with so much zeal, piety, and feeling, that he edified, and was admired. His discourse lasted more than two hours, yet he did not finish it. Indeed he acknowledged that the matter was so abundant, that it would have been sufficient for a whole lent. This expression was striking; but it will appear just to those who, after having followed the great actions of the holy priest, will follow us in the detail of his virtues, of which we shall speak, after having sketched his portrait according to custom.

Vincent of Paul was of a middling size, but well proportioned. He had a large head, somewhat bald; a broad forehead; eyes full of fire, but of a fire tempered by mildness; a

grave and modest carriage; and an air of affability for which he was less indebted to nature than virtue. That simplicity which announces calm and uprightness of heart, reigned in his manners and countenance. He was of a bilious and sanguine habit; but his constitution was strong. His sojourn at Tunis had affected it, and after his return to France, he was always very sensible of the changes in the air, and consequently very subject to attacks of fever.

He possessed a comprehensive mind; he was circumspect and fit for great things, and was with difficulty taken by surprise. When an affair was confided to him, he applied himself seriously to it, discovered all the circumstances, penetrated all its relations, and foresaw all the inconveniences and consequences of it. When he could avoid giving his opinion at once, he delayed it until he could weigh the reasons for and against. Before giving a final decision, he consulted God in prayer, and conferred with those whose prudence and experience enabled them to enlighten him. This character, absolutely at variance with precipitation, prevented his ever taking a false step, and did not hinder him from doing "more good than twenty other saints have done;" these are the expressions of a very respectable person, Mlle. de Lamoignon. His history, in which however we have suppressed so many things, is an incontestable proof of it.

If he did not hurry matters, he was not alarmed by their number, nor by the difficulties he met with. He persevered with a strength of mind superior to every obstacle. He bore the burthen and delays with a tranquillity, of which only great souls are capable. When in an assembly any important matter was treated, he listened with great attention to those who spoke, without ever interrupting any person. If any one interrupted him, he stopped short; and as soon as the person had ceased, he resumed the thread of his discourse peaceably, and with an admirable presence of mind. His reasoning was just, nervous, always very precise; he expressed himself in good language, and with a certain natural eloquence, not only calculated to develop his thoughts, but also to move, persuade, and entice. particularly when he en

deavored to incline others to virtue. When he spoke first, he laid down the question in a manner so profound, and at the same time with such order and clearness, that it astonished the most expert. Deeply skilled in the great art of making himself all to all, and accommodating himself to every mind, he lisped with the child, and spoke the language of the most sublime reason to the perfect. "In discussions of little importance, the common man would think himself upon a level with him; in the management of the greatest affairs, the proudest geniuses never found him below them." This is the testimony of Chrétien François de Lamoignon, president of the parliament of Paris, and what a testimony from a magistrate so capable of appreciating merit!

Vincent was an enemy to all duplicity, he spoke as he thought; but in his sincerity, there never was any thing imprudent. He knew how to be silent, when silence was proper, or, what was the same thing with him, when it was useless to speak. Above all, he was extremely attentive that nothing should escape him that savored of anger, or showed too little esteem, respect, or charity even for the vilest and most abject man.

In general his character was at variance with singularity. One of his principles was, that when things are well, we ought not to change them, under pretence of making them better. He mistrusted every new proposition, whether in speculation or practice. He said: "that the human mind was quick and active; that the most active and enlightened minds are not the best, if they are not the most discreet; and that we walk in security, when we do not go aside from the road in which the bulk of the wise have travelled." These few words are worth a book.

One of his most beautiful gifts was that of the discernment of characters. He seized with so much penetration the good and bad qualities of those of whom he was obliged to render an account, that Mr. le Tellier, the chancellor of France, never spoke of him but with admiration, and as the best head in the council of the king.

The qualities of his mind seemed to yield to those of his heart. That heart was noble and generous, liberal, tender,

compassionate, firm in sudden events, intrepid when duty was in question, always on its guard against the seductions of favor, always open to the voice of indigence, which never experienced from him that first coolness which disconcerts it, and which, at every moment of the day, found him as accessible, as if he had lived for it alone.

It was this kindness of heart that bound him so perfectly to those who professed to love virtue. Yet he had so absolute an empire over his inclinations, that it could scarcely be perceived. Being a good father, still wise and orderly in his tenderness, each of his children was satisfied with the place he thought he possessed in his heart; and in his family, although numerous, there was no Joseph, who furnished cause of jealousy to his brethren.

Finally, although it cannot be said that he was without fault, since, by their own acknowledgment, even the apostles were not free from it, we may say that there scarcely ever were seen men engaged as he was in all sorts of affairs, obliged to deal with an immense number of persons of all kinds and conditions, exposed incessantly to the most dangerous occasions of taking some false step, whose life has been not only more above suspicion, but more universally esteemed. It has been also remarked that the Son of God was always so present to his eyes, that he submitted to him all his actions and all his words.

It is true that he has been reproached with two things, one that he was too slow in making up his mind in business, the other that he said too much good of his neighbor, and too much evil of himself.

We will acknowledge without difficulty that he was a little singular in these two points, and particularly in the latter. But that singularity, in which he will have very few imitators, might give occasion to say of him, what a father of the Church, St. Jerome, said of St. Paul, that his faults would have been virtues in others.

As to the dilatoriness of which he was accused, it is evident, and I have said it already, that he was an enemy to precipitation. But we must only place this to the account of

his virtue and the abundance of his knowledge. He discovered in affairs, and above all, in such as he had to manage, many windings which escape those who wish to be short with matters. Hence he often said, that he saw nothing more common than the bad success of hurried affairs. Thus virtue had a great share in his slowness, or rather in the maturity of his deliberations. "He dreaded," as he was used to say, "to encroach upon the designs of Providence. On the other hand he had such a low opinion of himself, that he thought he was only calculated to hinder good, or to mingle great imperfection with it, or diminish it. However, God has fully justified the conduct of his saint; and the true children of wisdom have made an apology for theirs, by agreeing that he commenced and finished in less than forty years, what a great number of others would not have completed, nor perhaps even attempted in whole centuries.

With regard to the manner in which he spoke of himself on every occasion, it is very certain that it is contrary to common custom. True humility is very rare, and religion has scarcely an exercise which costs nature more. Vincent possessed it in so eminent a degree, that Cardinal de la Rochefoucault has often been heard to say, that if true humility was to be sought upon earth, it must be found in that holy priest. In fact, although it is saying a great deal, we can assert that this faithful imitator of our humble God, never suffered an occasion of humiliation to escape him. He was so full of the idea of his wretchedness, that he saw in himself nothing but the impression of vice and corruption. This was his whole excess; for he was not one of those morose devotees, who are almost as much dissatisfied with others, as they are with themselves. He shut his eyes to the faults of his neighbor, particularly when he was not charged with his direction. He esteemed greatly the character of those good souls, who in the order of charity and prudence, think always advantageously of their brethren, and who cannot see virtue without loving those who profess it. This was his practice; but wisdom and discretion always ruled him. If he willingly rejoiced with others for the graces which God had bestowed

on them, he was more reserved with regard to his own children. He loved them tenderly; but he rarely praised them in their presence, unless the glory of God and their own good obliged him to act otherwise. We repeat it then confidently: those to whom conduct so holy seems a kind of fault, must desire that these pretended faults may be multiplied, and honestly agree that they very much resemble the most sublime virtues.

To finish his portrait, it will be sufficient to add that Jesus Christ was his only model. He had him so deeply imprinted upon his heart, that he showed it in his thoughts, in his conversations, in all his actions. It was in him that he sought his morality and all his policy. He had contracted a pleasing habit of honoring him in all men, and all men in him. He considered him as head of the Church in the successors of St. Peter, as prince of pastors in the bishops, as the only teacher in the doctors, as judge of the judges of the earth in magistrates, as the son of a mechanic in those who live by their labor, as infirm in the sick, as agonising in the dying. In fine he was so filled with him, that those who have studied him most, have considered those beautiful words which escaped him once in a transport of love as his device: "Nothing pleases me but in Jesus Christ."

But in him love was not confined to affection and feelings: he wished it to be effective, active, always ready to declare itself by works. He loved much, and he often repeated those words of a great servant of God: "*Totum opus nostrum in operatione consistit.*" He considered as nothing, or as trifling what is called ravishments and extacies when they are separated from works. With such principles, the office of Martha is united to that of Mary; and it was this that our holy priest did with an activity which neither the greatest persecution, nor the frost of age could ever suspend. The history of his virtues upon which we are about to enter, will prove more and more that he did it with a degree of perfection, which must place him upon a level with the greatest saints; and that it was not without reason that a wit of the age said, "that we have only to read his life to be convinced that he was not too easily canonised."

Book Fifth.

OF THE VIRTUES, THE MISSIONS, AND THE VENERATION OF ST. VINCENT OF PAUL.

It has been remarked at all times, that the saint whose history I continue, gave himself up most willingly to the practice of those virtues which, like humility, patience, and the support of the neighbor, recur every day. But it has also been remarked that he practised them in a manner far superior to the generality of the just, and that he possessed in an eminent degree those of which the exercise is most rare and most difficult. The details upon which we are about to enter, will oblige even his enemies to admit the justice of these two observations, if they can resolve to follow us without passion and prejudice.

As faith is the foundation of Christian virtue, Vincent, like a wise architect, looked up to it as the stone upon which he was to erect the edifice of his salvation; and it was for that reason, that he always guarded it with the greatest care. He kept it at Tunis against the most flattering promises of a master who had almost absolute power over him. He preserved it without diminution, whilst a chaplain to Margaret, in spite of the terrible temptation to which he was exposed. He preserved it amidst the troubles caused him by a rising heresy, by which efforts were made more than once to seduce him, and which would have been more prodigal of its eulogies than it had been of its outrages against him, could it have succeeded in gaining him, or making him hesitate. In fine,

he removed from his company and from those who depended on him, that spirit of curiosity which agrees so ill with proper submission ; and he preferred to see his cherished daughters of the Visitation, remain poor than to be enriched by a boarder who, in bestowing property upon them, might have deprived them of the treasure of faith.

The exalted idea which he had of that important virtue, induced him to spread it as much as was in his power. Hence the catechisms and instructions which he gave, even in travelling, to the children and to the poor, who are commonly most neglected. Hence the establishment of his congregation, that is to say, of a body of evangelical laborers destined to sow and cultivate faith in the most sterile lands. Hence the holy pleasure with which he published the good performed by companies, which a jealous eye would have considered as rivals, but which his faith looked upon as models.

If he possessed the firmness and purity of faith, he had also its plenitude. It animated his actions, his words, his thoughts : it was with the level of faith that he regulated his judgments, formed and executed his most laudable projects. A design supported by reasons of wise policy, was only pleasing to him, when it was conformable to the maxims of the gospel. He was persuaded, and he often repeated that the affairs of God succeeded so badly, only because those who urged their execution, were guided too much by natural motives. It was for this reason that he incessantly recalled himself and his children to the light of faith. By the aid of that light which pierces the most obscure places, he saw in a simple countryman the image of a God who became poor, and who seems only to have come upon earth to be the evangelist of the poor. "O God!" cried he on this occasion, "how worthy of contempt do the poor appear when they are only considered with the eyes of the flesh and of the world! But how beautiful are they when considered in God, and according to the esteem which Jesus Christ had for them!"

Such was the faith of the holy priest. To be well acquainted with the nature of it, we have only to cast our eyes upon his other virtues. By the excellence and multitude of

the fruits, we can know the strength of the root to which they owe their origin.

Confidence in God was so eminently the virtue of St. Vincent of Paul, that we may say that, after the example of the father of believers, he often hoped against hope itself. A poor, simple individual as he was, he executed innumerable projects which even princes would not have dared to imagine. He supported establishments which appeared desperate. He calmed disquietness which appeared unappeasable. But in all this he did not rely upon himself, nor upon an arm of flesh, whatever it might be. God alone was his resource; and that God, always attentive to the cry of those who hope in him, did not fail him. Twenty times did they represent to him, that the expense to be incurred for the nourishment of the candidates for orders, and for the great number of persons who, every week, made a retreat in his house, exposed him to ruin; twenty times did he answer that the treasures of Providence are inexhaustible, that want of confidence dishonors God, and that riches were more to be feared for his congregation than poverty. One day, the eve of an ordination, the procurator came eagerly to tell him, that he had not a cent to defray the expense: "Oh! what good news!" cried the holy priest: "now we shall see whether we have confidence in God."

It was not that heaven ever performed miracles in his favor, and that it came at a fixed moment to the aid of his indigence, for we have seen him and his company reduced to the necessity of eating oat and barley bread. But he looked upon these passing accidents, as trials without which we cannot know whether we have true and entire confidence in God. Thus he was always the same in these occasions doubly painful for a man who is at the head of a numerous community. It has been constantly remarked that the serenity of his countenance increased in proportion to the afflictions which befel him personally, or his children. To the innumerable objections with which human prudence assailed him, he made no other reply than that of the royal prophet: *Qui*

timent Dominum sperent in eo; adjutor eorum et protector eorum est.

I do not know whether the saint, who was called to many houses, had perceived that perfect confidence is not always the most perfect virtue of communities. It is however incontestable, that he recommended it on a multitude of occasions, both to his missionaries and to the Sisters of Charity, who, on account of the dangers of every kind to which they are often exposed, have more need of diffidence in themselves and dependence upon God alone. He often announced to them the protection of heaven in a tone so decisive, that one would have thought he had secret reasons for calculating upon it; and his predictions were more than once justified by the event. We have said elsewhere, that one of those virtuous young ladies came forth safe and sound from amidst the ruins of a building which fell in entirely; we will here add that a joist of their principal house having broken and drawn the floor with it, Providence permitted that there should not be a single person there, although a moment before there were several, and the foundress had but just gone out. "O my daughters!" said the holy priest at the time, "be assured that, provided you keep a holy confidence in your hearts, God will preserve you in whatever place or danger you may be."

This treasure of hope, with which the Lord had enriched Vincent of Paul, served him at one time to sustain Madame le Gras against the dread which she had of losing him; at another, to pacify those who were tempted to despair, from an idea more or less confused of reprobation; Sometimes also to interdict a too continual view of death to those in whom it might weaken confidence. For, although the thought of the last day was one of the practices which he recommended to ward off the darts of the enemy, he was unwilling for any one to occupy himself with it, to the prejudice of a holy and well founded hope; because without a firm hope there can be no true love, and love is the fulfilling of the law.

Our saint was so inundated with it, that it could be seen at the first glance, that he was entirely under the empire of holy charity. Hence, those vivid and tender aspirations

which, like a fire too much confined in the bosom of the earth, escaped him at frequent intervals: "O my Saviour! O my God! when will you grant me the grace to be entirely yours, and to love you alone?" Hence, that ardent desire which he always had, that God should be more and more loved, blessed, and glorified at all times and in all places. Hence, in fine, that capital maxim, which was always his, that, to please God in great things, we must form the habit of pleasing him generously in the most trifling ones; that the latter commonly are more surely done for his glory; the former, on the contrary, often vanish in smoke, because self-love and reference to ourselves corrupt or weaken them.

As real purity of intention which seeks God alone is incompatible with human respect, the holy priest could not bear that his children should act with the view of pleasing men. The aversion he had for mere human motives displayed itself one day in one of those sudden emotions, which evince the habitual dispositions of the heart. One of his company having humbled himself before the others for having acted through human considerations, Vincent, in affliction, exclaimed, "that it was better to be cast, bound hand and foot, upon burning coals, than to perform an action to please men."

His conversation was simple, but the love with which he was inflamed, gave it a warmth of which those who listened to him, did not fail to feel the impression. Hence, of so great a number of bishops who attended his conferences, there was none, who did not feel confused, when asked to conclude; and one of them told him one day publicly, that one word from his mouth had a greater effect than all they could say. There was but one opinion about it throughout the whole kingdom. Armand de Montmorin, Archbishop of Vienna, says in his letter to Clement XI, that there was no sermon, nor pious reading, that made so lively an impression as the discourses of the servant of God. The great Bossuet, in the letter which he wrote to the same pontiff, takes Jesus Christ to witness that in hearing this holy priest, one was reminded of the words of the prince of the apostles:

Si quis loquitur, quasi sermones Dei. Francis de Lomenie de Brienne, bishop of Coutances, remembered more than forty-five years after the death of Vincent, the pleasure he had experienced, on hearing him in his family with which he had been very intimate. Victor de Melian, who was afterwards bishop of Aleth, gives the same testimony of him; and we can confirm it by that of the most illustrious ladies of his time, although in matter of style and conversation, they may not always be the most indulgent. The wife of President de Lamoignon was so penetrated by an exhortation which he made to the ladies of his assembly, that turning towards the duchess of Mantua, who was afterwards queen of Poland, she said: "Well! Madam, may we not say, like the disciples of Emmaus, that our hearts were burning with the love of God, whilst he spoke to us? For my part," added she with her accustomed humility, "although I am very little sensible to the things which relate to God, I acknowledge to you, that my heart is completely penetrated with what that holy man has just said to us." "You must not be astonished," replied the princess, "Mr. Vincent is like an angel of the Lord, who carries upon his lips the burning coals of the divine love which inflames his heart."

But it was not only to such cultivated souls, it was to hearts more than insensible, that our saint communicated a portion of the sacred fire which uninterruptedly consumed him. One of his priests having presented to him a hardened sinner with whom he could do nothing, Vincent spoke to him, effectually moved him, and filled him with holy confusion. At this very moment, the first fruits of the new man began to be perceived. The child of iniquity groaned at his chains. He begged the favor of a spiritual retreat, to free himself from his sins: he performed it with fervor, and adhered firmly to his first engagements. He published every where, that the mildness and charity of the saint had gained his heart, and that he had never heard any one before speak like him.

But the love of Vincent was not confined to words, it expressed itself in actions. He wished, according to his own saying, that God should be loved by the sweat of the brow

His whole life is a proof of it, and the rest of his virtues will confirm it.

One of the most important, and at the same time one of the most painful to nature, was his great and perfect submission to the whole will of God. He undertook nothing, he gave no counsel, without having previously consulted Him, to learn what he required of him. Liberty and slavery, sickness and health, life and death, were all alike to him, provided God was pleased. He saw himself, and more than once he saw his dear children, like the just of whom St. Paul speaks, under oppression, in misery, in chains. Yet his tranquillity was always unalterable. This word alone, *God wills it*, calmed his mind, and cut short useless reflections.

Some time after the pestilence had taken away from him six or seven of his companions who labored at Genoa, that house, where tears were still flowing, lost a very important suit. The new superior wrote about it to Vincent of Paul. Here is the answer of that incomparable man; I know not if the life of the greatest saints would furnish any thing more beautiful: "Long live justice; you must believe, sir, that it is found in the loss of your suit. The same God who gave you property, has taken it away from you; blessed be his holy name. Property is an evil, when it is where God does not wish it to be. The greater our resemblance to our Lord stripped of every thing, the greater also will be our share in his spirit. Let us then be led by our Father who is in heaven, and let us try upon earth, only to will and not will with him." This last expression was very familiar to the man of God. It was because he was persuaded, and he said so one day from the abundance of his heart, "that to conform in all things to the will of the Lord, is to live upon earth the very life of Jesus Christ."

From this perfect submission arose in him that spirit of indifference, which, by a tie which grace alone can explain, is closely united to tenderness, and serves to rectify it. He loved his congregation, and he had just reason to love it. Yet he never took one step to increase or enrich it. He loved all his children like a true father; but as he loved them

as an eminently Christian man, he only prayed for their health or life under the good pleasure of God and for his greater glory. We have seen how much he was affected by the death of the Abbé de Tournus, and by that of Messrs. Lambert and Portail. He supposed with reason, that all those of his company would be also very sensible of such losses. "Yet," says he, in his circular letters to them, "I do not doubt that you have praised God for this privation, and that you have said to him, that you would not wish him to have done otherwise, since such was his good pleasure." How much murmuring would be banished, how much thanksgiving would be substituted to useless complaints, if the sentiments of the servant of God were those of the generality of the faithful.

To be so constantly submissive to the whole will of God, it is necessary to have him incessantly before our eyes. The holy love with which Vincent was penetrated, taught him early such a fruitful maxim; and he practised it to the end. A virtuous priest, who observed him for several years, found him always like Abraham, in the presence of his Master. He saw nothing but him; the multitude of affairs, unforeseen reverses, afflicting news, all this only served to remind him of that Supreme Being, who rules at will the universe and all events. When he was consulted, and it was often the case, on affairs of every description, he scarcely ever answered, until he had himself consulted God; and it was for this reason that between the question and the answer, he commonly made a little pause; and he also began generally by these words: *In nomine Domini*.

For fear that his imagination might withdraw him from the presence of God, he recalled himself to it at least four times in an hour, that is, whenever the clock struck; and then, whether alone or in company, he uncovered himself, made the sign of the cross, and raised his mind to God. When he entered his room, or that of one making a spiritual retreat, he went on his knees to invoke the Holy Ghost; and he did the same, on going out, to return thanks for his favors. He has bequeathed these practices to his congregation

and they are certainly neither the most distinguished for talents or virtue, who neglect them as trifles.

The beauty of the country, the brilliancy of the flowers and the various fruits, enabled him to ascend without effort to their first principle. When he found himself at the court, in those superb apartments where crystal and glass multiply an object a thousand times, he said: "O Lord! if men have skill to prevent the slightest motion from escaping their sight, how can I withdraw myself from yours?"

It was only because it is scarcely possible to have the eyes always cast down, that Vincent perceived in travelling the verdure of the country, and the enamel of the fields. We shall find hereafter that he carried his mortification so far as to refuse himself the innocent pleasure presented by the riches of nature. Whilst walking in Paris, he occupied himself with God, almost as if he had been alone in that city, where the tumult and noise may excuse distractions. When he was obliged to make use of a carriage, his eyes were generally closed; and most frequently, to be less distracted, he drew the curtains, so that he could neither see nor be seen. Perhaps, also, humility had a share in this; for I know from the Rev. Father Fleuriau, who was a witness of it, that the scholars pointed out the servant of God, and said one to another: "There is the saint going by."

A man so constantly united to God could not fail to be a man of prayer. Hence, whatever he had to do, or wherever he was, an hour of meditation was always with him the morning oblation; and that oblation he made with such lively emotion, that, unable to support its ardor, he often broke out in sighs which were perceptible to every one except himself. Although he spoke well concerning God at all times, something more was perceived in him, when he spoke immediately after prayer. Independently of words, it was only necessary to take a glance at the whole of his conduct, to be convinced that prayer was his support and nourishment.

As he knew by experience the great fruits produced by that exercise, he made it an inviolable law with his children, being well persuaded that his congregation would

subsist before God, in proportion to its fidelity in this respect. He would not even have the sick dispensed from it. But the method he proposed to them, was so well suited to their condition, that it could not fatigue them. To unite themselves to God by tender affections, to form acts of confidence in him, of resignation to his will, of repentance for faults committed against his law, was all he required of them, and this did not exceed their strength.

It was not only his own companions, that Vincent inspired with the spirit of prayer, he endeavored to communicate it to strangers, both ecclesiastics, who without it are nothing but salt without savor, and seculars, because he had no doubt that if they would contract the habit of it, they would execute the good resolutions taken during their retreat.

He went still farther; for he not only made the ladies of his assembly so many women of prayer, but he induced many to establish in their families those kinds of repetition, which are only in use in the most holy communities. It was on such an occasion that a servant, giving an account of his meditation, said in substance that he was occupied in it with the duties which the Son of God prescribes to us with regard to the poor; that in consequence he thought himself obliged to do something for them; but having nothing to give them, because he was poor himself, he had taken the resolution to uncover his head in passing by them, and to speak with kindness to those who should address him. How many young ecclesiastics have never made so good a meditation. *Ideo ipsi iudices vestri erunt* (Matt. xii, 17).

After the example of the Saviour, who, from time to time retired apart to pray, Vincent, notwithstanding his important duties, did not fail every year to give at least eight days to a spiritual retreat, an exercise of which prayer and similar acts constitute the principal part. It was there that separated from the world, and alone with God, he called himself to an account for the past, lamented the present, and took new resolutions for the future. On this subject I will add that the saint wished, that, however unfaithful a person may have been to his resolutions, he should always continue to

take them. "But," said he, "in order not to take them in vain, we must mistrust our own strength, pray a great deal, ask of God the grace to know and overcome the obstacles which have been fatal to us;" not to be discouraged either at the faults which human weakness makes us commit, or at the dryness and disgust which we sometimes experience in meditation. "It is," said he again, "an exercise which God sends us to try us, and I know virtuous persons who, by the good use which they make of it, have advanced a great deal in virtue."

To give some idea of the devotion of St. Vincent, and of his piety towards God, it will be sufficient to follow him in the practice of the duties which are the object of that important virtue.

Although he always went to bed late, and often could not sleep more than two hours, he rose regularly at four, and with so much fervor, that the second stroke of the bell, never found him in the position in which he was at the first. He made an offering of himself and all his actions to God; and after having tenderly besought him through Jesus Christ, not to permit him to have the misfortune to offend him, he repaired to the church to make his meditation with the community. This pious exercise was followed either by confession, for he could not bear the appearance of sin, or by a new preparation for the tremendous sacrifice which he was going to offer. It may be said that in this great action he was a model for the most accomplished priests. In his manner of pronouncing, performing the ceremonies, turning towards the people to announce the peace and benediction of God, there was discovered something so holy, so majestic, that persons who did not know him, have been heard several times to say to one another: "How well that priest says mass! He must be either a saint or an angel."

With the exception of the three first days of his annual retreat, he celebrated mass every day without ever failing. Sometimes, and it has been seen when he was more than seventy-five years of age, he served a second mass after his own. After the example of the zealous Mr. Bourdoise, he could not see,

without real pain, a clergyman yield to seculars the right which he has to serve the priest in this function, which angels would glory in taking upon them, if they could do so.

He performed the public offices in a most moving and affecting manner; but he did not acquit himself of them in a less becoming manner in private. He always recited his breviary on his knees and with his head bare. He never gave up that attitude of respect, until within the two or three last years of his life, because he could not do otherwise.

He had so marked a veneration for the mysteries of the Holy Trinity and Incarnation, that he begged of the sovereign pontiff to make it a strict obligation for all the members of his congregation to honor them with a particular respect. But to give a proper idea of his piety towards the sacrament of the love of Jesus Christ, it would be necessary to feel a portion of it. When his employments afforded him a little respite, he profited by it to go and throw himself at the feet of his Saviour. He there forgot himself sometimes, and remained for hours. He read there, and always on his knees, the letters which he judged to be important; and he never read them until he had offered to the God-Man their good and evil results. He avoided speaking there, and if any one, were it a prince, wished to say a word to him, he endeavored to lead him out; but he did it with so much grace, that no one could be offended at it.

In his travels, he had the troublesome, but holy custom of dismounting, when he passed a village, the church of which was open, and he entered it to pay his respects to the hidden God who honors it by dwelling in it. If it was closed, he did it interiorly; but open or shut, he always approached to the door, when he was to dine or pass the night in the place. The saints resemble one another, and I have remarked with great pleasure, that the celebrated archdeacon of Evreux Henri Marie Boudon, had exactly the same practice.

When his infirmities became such, that he could no longer celebrate, he received the communion every day; but he did it with so much fervor, that, in coming from the holy table, he might have been taken for a man transported out of himself.

It was in consequence of the great effects which the bread of life produced in him, that he urged his children and strangers to keep themselves in a condition to receive it frequently. He grieved to see so solid a devotion growing cool amongst Christians. He attributed it partly to natural indolence, for which the watchfulness necessary for frequent communion is a burthen from which it willingly discharges itself; and partly to the false zeal of innovators, who, in this point as well as many others, have carried every thing to excess, and who, as he proved one day by the example of a respectable lady, instead of establishing piety by that species of voluntary excommunication, have only introduced the spirit of pride, contempt for others, and revolt against lawful authority.

It is easily imagined, that a man so full of love and respect for the sacrament of our altars, was extremely sensible to the outrages committed against it in his time by heresy and the licentiousness of arms. Penances, sighs, considerable presents of chalices, ciboriums and vestments, pilgrimages, fervent communions upon the spots, missions dictated by zeal and sustained by good example, all was put in practice to repair as much as possible these sacrilegious insults, and restore to Jesus Christ a portion of the honor of which he had been robbed. The name alone of that God Saviour made an impression upon him, which is only known to those who love truly and perfectly. Indeed he copied him so perfectly in all his conduct, that "the imitation of the Word incarnate" was looked upon as his distinctive virtue. It was the book he opened to the learned as well as to the ignorant; to kings and subjects; to those whom God nourished with delicious milk and those whose portion was gall. Louis XIII asked him in his last sickness, which was the best manner to prepare for death. "Sire," replied Vincent, "it is to imitate the preparation of Jesus Christ: *non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat.*" Marie de Meaupeou Foucquet, so well known for her piety and her love for the poor, suffered dreadful uneasiness about the salvation of her son; and she communicated it to the holy priest. "Give," said he, "the child and the mother to our Lord, and he will render you a good ac-

count of both. Study that great model, and conform yourself to his will." She did so, and was relieved. The whole world has been acquainted with the disgrace of the superintendant of the finances, and the resources which he found in the zeal of the celebrated Pelisson; but, few persons know as I do, and by as sure ways, that in his prison he became a model of mildness, patience, and above all, of humility.

To piety towards Jesus Christ, Vincent of Paul always united a tender devotion to his most holy mother. To celebrate her feasts worthily, he fasted on the eve, together with all his house. The day of the solemnity he celebrated with every possible devotion. He proposed to his brethren the examples of virtue presented by the mystery which the church honored. Wherever he heard the *Angelus* ring, if he were even with a prince, he knelt down to recite it. He visited often, and always through devotion, the temples erected in honor of that august Virgin. The moving title of Comforter of the Afflicted, which experience and the piety of the faithful have given her, was for him a motive to have recourse to her, amidst the sufferings and storms by which his life was so often beset. It was by the aid of that protection, that, in a frail vessel, he went from Tunis to Europe with a renegade, whom he had converted, and that, during the troubles of the Fronde, he escaped the dangers which the demon of discord raised up in his path. In a word, if followed from his infancy to his death, it will be found that he was one of the most devoted and faithful servants that the mother of God had in latter times.

To her he united by a necessary consequence, St. Joseph, her worthy spouse, whom he gave as a patron to his young seminarists; St. Peter, the liveliness of whose faith and love placed him at the head of the flock; St. Paul, whose indefatigable labors he admired; St. Vincent, martyr, under whose protection he had been placed at his baptism. Nor did he forget the apostle of the Indies, whom he always proposed as a model to those whom he sent into infidel or heretical countries; nor St. Francis of Sales, who had loved him

so tenderly, nor in fine, Mr. Olier, whose last breath he had received, and whom he invoked as a saint.

To increase the number of those who triumph in glory, he endeavored to break by his prayers the bonds of fire, which keep the souls in purgatory. He placed the benefactors of his congregation at the head. Three times every day, his children still say that psalm which the church has judged most fit to obtain for them a place of peace and refreshment.

Such Christian sentiments arose in Vincent of Paul from the zeal, which he always had for the glory of God : this zeal, which knew no bounds, was the principle of that with which he labored both for his own salvation and that of others. Let the reader recall to his memory what we have said of him in the body of his history, and he will see, that during his long career upon earth, he had no other end, than to form a perfect people for the Lord. Nor will it be less evident, that the zeal with which he labored for that end, had all the conditions which it should have, that is to say, it was prudent, enlightened, invincible, and disengaged from every interested motive. His zeal was prudent, never impetuous, never precipitate. The traits of father and friend always predominated in the reprimands which he was obliged to address to others. In his missions he thundered against sin ; but after having terrified the guilty, he inspired them with confidence and gained them by tenderness. When speaking to the great of the world, he never altered the truth ; but that truth, so often odious, was well received on account of the respect, and still more of the high idea they entertained of his uprightness and probity. In the seminaries he wished the young students to be formed with patience ; that they should first be made good Christians, and afterwards good ecclesiastics ; above all, that they should not be overwhelmed with advice, which is always offensive when caustic, always useless when too much multiplied.

His zeal was enlightened. The light of the gospel, the decisions of the church, the authority of the most celebrated doctors were its rules. In his doubts he had recourse to

Messrs. Ysambert and Duval, the first of whom was his penitent, and the second his director after Mr. de Bérulle. Great sense and good studies, in a word, nature and grace guided him by the sure road, which is properly distant from all extremes. He was very far from Jansenistical novelties; he was very far from the relaxation of the bad Casuists; and when their infamous apology had received at Rome the condemnation which it deserved, he informed his priests of it, as he had before informed them of the censure of the book of Jansenius. With regard to penances, he would adhere to the maxims of the holy council of Trent; that is to say, that although by apparent rigor a pretence is given to some persons to keep at a distance from the sacraments, the penance should be proportioned to the grievousness of the sin. "It is," said he, "because the holy severity, so much recommended by the canons of the church, and renewed by St. Charles, produces incomparably more fruit than too great indulgence."

His zeal was inviolable. Nothing was difficult to him, when the glory of God and the salvation of souls were in question. What must not have been the courage of a man, who succored vast provinces, the wants of which were always reviving, during a long course of years! A man, who to procure for the indigent the hospitals of Bicetre and Salpêtrière had obstacles of every kind to surmount! A man, who in the council of the king, dared to speak before a formidable minister, as if he had spoken at the judgment of God! One would say, that in the expedition to Madagascar, he was like Jacob, strong with God. Heaven and earth, men and the elements appeared to be in arms against him. Of his children, some were buried in the deep, others fell into the hands of the enemy; some died on arriving in port, others on the point of reaping an abundant harvest. These painful accidents did not move him, as they have not moved his successors; and Madagascar would still have its missionaries, had they not been forced to leave it, when Louis XIV gave it up.

Finally, the zeal of Vincent of Paul was pure and free from all views of interest. Far from traversing the seas, over-

running countries to reap the temporal goods of the people, he never rendered them any service, but at his own expense. If in the missions a rich curate offered his table, it was forbidden to accept it. It was not even permitted to receive the honorary of masses said for the faithful. The saint had it taken to the sick by the very persons who presented it.

To this first degree of disinterestedness, of which I shall be obliged to speak elsewhere, Vincent added another more difficult and much less common. Free from that spirit of jealousy against which those who pursue the same career are not always enough on their guard, he beheld the success of others with the holy joy of the children of God. He published it at home and abroad, and he has more than once rendered them services which most of them never knew. He did still more; for to exalt the labors of others, he went so far as to depreciate his own and those of his missionaries, in whom he saw only a small number of persons of little skill, whose weak labors could not find favor with God, but when coupled with the great harvest of others. Such was his zeal; and let us say at the same time, such was his humility. For a great deal of it was required to lose sight of the uniform testimony given to the merit and virtue of his priests by the most illustrious pastors of the first and second order, the most virtuous magistrates, often even by crowned heads.

His charity towards his neighbor, was as extensive as his zeal. Obligated to compress a matter which his piety rendered so vast, I will not here relate what he suffered for the interests of the king during the troubles of the Fronde, nor the danger to which he exposed his life to save that of the chancellor of France, nor the justice done him more than once by Ann of Austria in speaking of him as the most faithful servant of his prince. Nor will I speak of the tender respect which he always had for the apostolical See, a respect so profound, that neither Paulinus, nor Meletius, nor the whole universe could ever have detached him from the chair of Saint Peter. I will not even speak of his devotedness to the episcopal order, a devotedness which induced him on every occasion to support at the court and in parliament the just undertak-

ings of the bishops; to receive them as angels of the living God, to honor as his masters prelates who honored him as their father, and who, in the troublesome care of their diocese, had no surer resource than that of his credit and light. It seems as if the charity of the saints, where it takes a less lofty flight, has in it something more touching and admirable.

To commence by the inferior clergy, whoever bore its mark, was always sure to find with him consolation in their troubles, and a hand ever ready to wipe away their tears. A strange priest who was sick, asked aid of him; Vincent received him with kindness, lodged him, fed him, caused him to be taken care of, and kept him until he had recovered his strength. Another, who was making his retreat at Saint-Lazarus, fell sick there; the saint caused every imaginable attention to be paid to him. When this poor man recovered, Vincent gave him a cassock, a breviary, several little things, and ten crowns. A third, to whom he had given hospitality, carried away a cassock and a long cloak. They wanted to go after him: "Well," said Vincent, "provided it be to take to him what he is in want of, and not to demand what he has taken: he must be in great want, to have resorted to such conduct."

I suppress here a hundred other similar traits, and in saying a hundred, I reduce things to nothing. The simple detail of the aid, which he distributed or procured for the ecclesiastics of Ireland, persecuted by Cromwell, would be enough to exhaust the patience of the reader. It was so well known throughout the kingdom and in the neighboring states, that Vincent was the asylum of ecclesiastics who were in want, that although in consequence of the evil times, a prodigious multitude flocked to Paris, almost all came straight to Saint-Lazarus. But what was singular in this sacerdotal charity was, that it never cooled, and that, although in ornaments, sacred vessels, linen, and repairs of churches, it exceeded a million of livres, our saint thought he had never done enough. Thank God, he was the only one who thought so. There were few provinces where he was not looked upon

as the father both of pastors and people. His memory was here in benediction; and when a country curate, showing the coat which he wore, applied to him the words of Jesus Christ to St. Martin, "*et hinc me veste contexit,*" he said no more, than a thousand priests could have said.

He had also a very tender love for all communities. He was sometimes badly recompensed for it; and on one important occasion, he was opposed at Rome by a society to which he had rendered signal services in France. He revenged himself no otherwise than by saying, "that even if the ***** were to tear out his two eyes, he would never cease to love and serve them;" and he did so all his life. His veneration for religious was so profound, that, when any one of them paid him a visit, he threw himself at his feet, and forced him by perseverance to give him his blessing. But he did something more for them; and the reforms of Grandmond, Prémontré, Sainte-Genevieve, and Chancelade will be an eternal monument of the activity and extent of his charity in their regard. What he did for the whole body, he did more than a hundred times for the individuals themselves, either to reconcile them to their superior, or to prevent them from passing from one order to another, a line of conduct which he never approved, except when founded upon very solid reasons.

A man so full of charity for strange communities, could not fail to have much for those which he had himself formed. A more tender father for each of his children than a natural father would be for an only son, there was none amongst them, who had not reason to believe that they were tenderly loved by him. His words, his letters, even his reprimands bore the impress of charity. He anticipated their wants, supported them in their difficulties; he did not judge, much less did he condemn without hearing. Artful reports, disguised and subtle detractions, found no access to him. He gave his children, as many as seven conferences against that miserable vice, which sows trouble every where. It is probably to his lessons, that the pious Madeleine de Lamoignon owed both her admirable mildness and her inflexible aversion for detraction.

However ardent his charity was at all times it redoubled towards the infirm. Far from looking upon them as a burden, he considered them the benediction of the houses where God tries them. He gave good directions, that they should be well treated ; and what is more certain, he examined in person, to see that his orders were faithfully executed. In their convalescence, he enlivened them with relations of facts, in which, instruction was so well blended with amusement, that the mind and heart were equally benefitted.

If he earnestly recommended the love of neighbor to his missionaries, he did not fail to do as much to the Sisters of Charity, whose very name alone reminds them of the pains they should take to cultivate that important virtue. "Alas! my dear sisters," said he to them, "you have already so much to suffer from abroad and from your employments. What would it be, if you were to make for yourselves new crosses at home, which are always the most severe? Your houses would become a true purgatory, whilst charity should make them a paradise." He held the same language to the religious of St. Mary, and to the daughters of Providence. The constitutions which he drew up for these with Madame de Pollaillon, tend principally to establish in their hearts the empire of charity and humanity. This is the idea, which a late writer furnishes, and it is as just as precise.

Although it is easy to conclude from what we have said in the course of this history, that charity towards the poor was the predominant virtue of St. Vincent, the reader might find it strange, did we say nothing of it here. If we consider him from his infancy to the time of his death, almost all his life was passed in relieving the unfortunate. So many associations formed to take care of the sick, so many tears shed over the foundlings, so many hospitals founded by his care, so much aid procured for immense provinces, so many and such large sums distributed amongst the Barbary slaves, so many glorious establishments which still subsist, announced for more than a century how much he was actuated by mercy. It was for the poor he established a company of virgins who glory in being their servants. It was for them he gave a new

congregation to the church, and that he often reduced it to be in want of what was necessary, for fear that what was necessary might be wanting to the poor. It was for them, that after having obtained from an august queen even her jewels, he in a manner gave away himself, by borrowing considerable sums in his own name. In fine, it was for them that he gave so prodigiously during his life, that in the opinion of François Hebert, bishop of Agen, who knew him better than any one else, the total amount of his alms exceeds twelve hundred thousand Louis. Let those who study to obscure his glory, show us any thing in their heroes which approaches this! Yet this is only a sketch of his charity towards the poor. The perusal of his large life, although restricted in that respect, will give a better and more impressive idea of it.

That which it will give of the love he had for his enemies, will not be less consoling. As it is out of our power to furnish a detail here, it will be sufficient for us to say, that Vincent, when ready to go to the altar, took off his vestments to reconcile himself with a man by whom he had been offended; that he petitioned for the recall of a gentleman, who almost under the eyes of Ann of Austria had shamefully ill-treated him; that far from triumphing in the misfortunes generally experienced by those who abandon their first vocation, he obtained by his tears the revocation of the sentence of death pronounced against a thoughtless man, who after having deserted from his congregation, had deserted from his regiment; and finally, instead of abandoning to her miserable fate a woman, who had killed a brother of his house, almost under his eyes, he gave her money to effect her escape. If this was not giving his soul for those of his enemies, it was at least doing what we meet with, only in the lives of the greatest saints.

Meekness, that virtue so well calculated to gain hearts, was perhaps that which cost St. Vincent most. But at last by the power of watchfulness and prayer, he acquired it in so exalted a degree, that he would have been in this respect the first man of his age, had not that age beheld the holy bishop

of Geneva. He had to treat, and often on the same day, with persons of elevated minds, and with people of neither education nor understanding. Every one who saw him believed he saw St. Paul conjuring the Christians by the meekness and modesty of Jesus Christ.* He every where awakened the idea of the Saviour conversing with men. There was never any sign of displeasure on his countenance, any asperity in his words, or impatience in his gestures.

It was above all with heretics and with the poor country people, that mildness appeared to him most necessary. He had the consolation to gain three Protestants to the church on the same day. It was by the solidity of his proofs, but much more by his unction and mildness, that he effected this conquest. On this subject he recollected the expression of Cardinal du Perron, that he could convince the Calvinists, but it belonged to the bishop of Geneva to convert them.

As to the people of the country, who were always the great object of his zeal, he was persuaded that it is only by patience and mildness, that any thing can be done with them. In his opinion, which was always very correct, that oracle of the Scripture, "make thyself affable to the congregation of the poor," should be the rule of every priest. He was the first to put it in practice; and if the missions he made amongst the galley slaves, were attended with a success which astonished all France, it was in a great measure to the extreme mildness with which he treated them, that it was to be attributed. Indeed, that virtue which charms every where, had in him something so natural, so prudent, that it was difficult to resist it. A gentleman, accustomed to swearing, having once said before many other persons, that he wished the devil had him; the saint kindly embraced him, and said with a smile: "And I, sir, will keep you for God; it were a pity his enemy should have you." These few words edified the company very much: he to whom they were addressed was

* It is from the letter of Mr. Fénelon, archbishop of Cambray, that I take this beautiful expression. He had it from Mr. Tronson, the celebrated superior of St. Sulpice.

more struck than the rest. He acknowledged his fault and promised to correct himself.

The mildness of our saint pursued that just medium, which knows neither deficiency nor excess. He detested flattery, so far as to say that nothing was more unworthy of a truly Christian heart; but he did not less detest that servile deference, which to avoid displeasing men, often causes us to displease God. His constant rule was to imitate him, who, in advancing resolutely to his object, will do so by ways full of sweetness and mildness. *Attingit à fine usque ad finem fortiter, et disponit omnia suaviter.* Sap. 8. 1.

But Vincent knew how to unite the firmness necessary to one in authority, with the most wonderful humility. At first it would appear as if we could imitate him in his other virtues; but when we consider his ardor for contempt, we must yield; it appears inimitable. It is surprising, that he began very early to nourish those sentiments, so much opposed to nature; and that, in spite of the praise heaped upon him throughout Europe by the clergy and the laity, he never lost them. The reader has not forgotten, that, on his arrival in Paris, he abandoned his own name, for fear of being taken for a man of good family; that, although he had performed good studies, he gave himself out as but a poor scholar; that, on the occasion of that poor nephew, who came to see him in Paris, he gained one of the most complete victories over self-love; that he improved upon the odious compliment paid him by the abbé Saint-Cyran, when he treated him as an ignorant man, unfit to be at the head of his congregation; and that, in fine, at court, where birth is sometimes the principal merit, he commenced by publishing that he was the son of a poor countryman.

I add, what has been said more than once, and said without fear of exaggeration, that he always seized upon all the occasions of humbling himself, or rather that he sought them, when they did not present themselves. A man of a good family wrote to him from Acqs, that he had the honor of being his relation, and on that ground besought his protection. The saint assured him of his good will; but

he did what he could, to persuade him that being the son of a poor husbandman, he could not be of so good a family as he. A portuguese nobleman, the Count de Obidos, wrote to him a letter full of esteem and respect. Vincent, being afflicted because there was still some one who did not look upon him as the last of men, did all in his power to make him change his opinion; and, as usual, he forgot neither his spiritual poverty, nor the humility of his birth. Peter J. F. de Montgaillard, bishop of Saint-Pons, happened to mention to him a chateau of his own family. "I know it," replied the holy priest: "For I took care of cattle in my youth, and I often led them in that direction." This quick trait of humility struck the prelate so much, that he repeated it a hundred times in his life, and he never did so without shedding tears.

But nothing in my opinion shows better the humility of our saint, and the idea generally conceived of it, than a circumstance which took place at Marseilles, when they wished to commence the process of his beatification. The commissioners having visited the halls of the magnificent hospital, which the convicts owe to the charity of the holy priest, an old galley slave who was blind, and who heard more noise than usual, asked what was the matter. "They want to know," replied some persons, "whether you knew Mr. Vincent." "Yes, to be sure," replied he, "I made my general confession to him; he was a very holy man. But why do they want to know that?" "Because," said they, "they wish to canonize him." "It is trouble thrown away," cried he, "Mr. Vincent was too humble, he will never allow it." Would to God that this answer, which so many distinguished persons have admired, would induce them, and myself more than they, to say with truth what our saint so often said through an excess of humility: "I am not a man, but a poor worm that crawls upon the earth, who knows not whither he goes: but who seeks only to hide himself in thee, O my God! who art all my desire. I am a poor blind thing, the most useless, the most miserable of men, and one who most of all stands in need of the mercies of the Lord."

And this very man, who places himself below the devils

who, at the college des bons Enfants went so far as to acknowledge before his priests the most grievous faults he had ever committed; who found no difficulty in going on his knees publicly before a wretch who dared to strike him; who debased himself; I find difficulty in saying it, but why should I not do so, after the example of a great bishop? who debased himself so far as to clean the shoes of a candidate for orders; in a word, that man so vile, so abominable in his own eyes, was as firm as a rock, when the interests of God and his church were in question. He then showed that contempt for himself was not incompatible with true greatness of soul. We have seen him, notwithstanding his just deference for his most signal benefactor, oppose the re-establishment of a scandalous abbess; close the entrance of the house of the Visitation to Princesses accustomed to obtain whatever they wished; reject from the sanctuary those powerful men who could not edify the church, but who well knew how to take revenge; in fine propose to the prime minister to sacrifice himself to the public good, and to a great queen to lend her hand to the sacrifice. To judge whether in such critical cases a man without birth has need of courage, we need only examine whether, in his place, those who hold the first rank in the state, would often dare to imitate him.

In learning from the Son of God to be meek and humble of heart, our saint learned from him to be obedient on all occasions in which religion commanded or permitted him to be so. He was in the hands of his director, like a child who has no will. It was through obedience that he entered the parish of Clichy and the house of the general of the galleys; that he became the director of Madame de Gondi; that he afterwards accepted and resumed the charge of first superior of his congregation; that, without ever seeking privileges, which he might have obtained more easily than many others, he desired that his priests should depend absolutely upon the ordinary in what concerned their exterior functions, and that he at last accepted in the council of the king, a place to which he would have undoubtedly preferred the chains with which he had been loaded at Tunis.

A man who so well knew how to practice obedience had a right to prescribe it to others. And this he did perfectly with regard to the communities which Providence had confided to his care. He told them that this virtue combined with regularity, was the soul, and as it were the substance of religion; that all the good of the creature consists in fulfilling the designs of God, and that they are not fulfilled but by the faithful practice of obedience; that in fine those who are disunited from the heart of their superiors, who murmur against them, who contradict them, become guilty of interior apostasy. He added that obedience, to be perfect, must be voluntary, because it should spring from the heart and from affection; prompt, because true obedience admits no excuse or delay; courageous, because it should not be arrested by the sight of obstacles; persevering, because it is necessary to obey like Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ obeyed even unto death.

The example of that God Saviour was the first motive, which the holy priest employed to give animation to the practice of that important virtue. But he joined to it another well calculated to excite dread and compassion for those who are in authority, the terrible account which they will have to render at the tribunal of the sovereign Judge. Intoxicated during life with their trifling grandeur, they frequently do not think, either of fulfilling their duties well, or of causing them to be fulfilled by others. At their death their soul must first account for itself, and then for those of inferiors. Is it just to add to a weight, which of itself is already so enormous?

Such perfect obedience supposes a great deal of candor and simplicity. That of Vincent of Paul was admirable; the great Bossuet did him as much justice on this score, as the Cardinal de la Rochefoucault had done to his humility. He never knew the equivocal steps, or the tortuous routes of the prudent of the world. Always ingenuous, always upright, if he did not always tell every truth without distinction, because there were secrets in the state which were for himself alone, he never said nor insinuated any thing contrary to truth. A simple man, said he, looks only at God, and wishes to please him alone. If he does not discover all his thoughts,

for simplicity is a discreet virtue, he takes care to avoid whatever may lead to believe that he has in his mind and heart what he really has not. In a word, he is simple in every thing; simple in his instructions, simple in his manner of acting and speaking.

That simplicity in speaking, and above all, in the instructions given to the people, was a point which our saint was never tired of inculcating. His fear, his great fear, was that his children would have, like many others, the misfortune to wish to acquire a name by showy discourses. "Men wish to shine," said he, "wish to be spoken of, wish to hear it said that they have succeeded well. Cursed pride, how much good dost thou corrupt! Thou dost cause men to preach themselves, and not Jesus Christ; and instead of edifying, they destroy and ruin." To words, Vincent added examples of which he had been witness. One day he threw himself on his knees, at the feet of one of his priests, to conjure him to make his instructions to the candidates for orders in a simple manner. He could produce no effect upon a man full of his own merit, who wished to follow his taste, who in fact did so, but absolutely without any fruit. Another, on the contrary, who was guided by the advice of the saint, charmed in such a manner a whole province, the inhabitants of which were considered very acute, that they offered him a very handsome settlement.

But as simplicity without prudence becomes indiscretion or stupidity, the servant of God always took great care to unite these two virtues. But he united them so well that up to the time of his death, he was looked upon as the wisest man of his age. Bishops, magistrates, curates, doctors, religious, superiors of communities, all came to him as to the oracle of the age. "I speak from what I have seen," says an eye-witness; as I myself accompanied the prince of Conti, and Messrs. D'Urfé and Fénélon on a visit which they paid him to have his advice on different matters.

It was the high and just esteem in which his prudence was held, that induced St. Francis of Sales to make him accept the office of superior of his first monastery of Paris;

Ann of Austria to place him at the head of her council, the illustrious Guillaume de Lamoignon, the first president of the parliament, to consult him as "a superior mind, not only in matters of conscience, but also in secular affairs;" the house of Fénelon to give consent to a marriage which it did not approve, and which, according to the prediction of the saint, gave to the church the great archbishop of Cambray.

But why should we seek for the opinions of individuals on a subject where public facts speak so loudly? Let us remember the great establishments which he formed, the means he made use of to succeed in them, the wise regulations which he gave them, the manner in which he appeased the bishop of Mans, and which the most refined policy will always envy him: in a word, let us examine his conduct in Africa and in Europe, and we will acknowledge without difficulty, with Messrs. le Tellier, chancellor of France, and Claude le Pelletier, minister of state, that Vincent of Paul conducted himself in every thing with so much prudence and wisdom, that those to whom justice and reason compelled him to be most opposed, could not complain of him.

These last words lead us to say a word of the justice of St. Vincent. To prove that he possessed it, like the other virtues, in a heroical degree, I shall not follow him, either in the manner in which he rendered to Cæsar what belonged to Cæsar, or in the always enlightened choice he made of the officers for whom he had occasion as lord of the territory of St. Lazarus, or in the attention which he paid, notwithstanding his mildness, to maintain the severity of the laws, when the stronger law of the pardon of injuries did not compel him to act otherwise. I shall content myself with pointing out his conduct in the lawsuits which the spirit of chicanery or surprise sometimes brought upon him. I can assure my readers beforehand, that it was as becoming a Christian, as it is little imitated by the most part of Christians.

His maxim was to prefer sacrificing something of his rights to giving an improper example to his neighbor by going to law. But as there are characters incapable of adopting measures of compromise, he never engaged in the defence

without having consulted, at home and abroad, all that was most wise and judicious. If sometimes he was mistaken in such matters, as it appears to me he was in an important case, through the celebrated Andrew Duval, at least he had prudence on his side.

When the affair was commenced, and when he saw the judges, it was less to recommend his cause to them, than to beg them earnestly to have nothing but equity in view. He was neither for or against any person. He was equally solicitous for plaintiff and defendant. He exposed and laid stress upon the reasons of the adverse party, as well, and perhaps better than that party could do. He even considered solicitations as steps that were little conformable to justice. He said that a magistrate who fears God pays no regard to them; and that, when he was in the council of the queen, he considered them as nothing; and that he was satisfied with examining whether the thing in question was just or not.

He was obliged to have a lawsuit with the inhabitants of Valpuseau. When they came to Paris, in quality of parties in the cause, he could not have received them better. He lodged them, made them eat in the refectory, at his side, and paid their travelling expenses. When the affair was about to be decided, he caused notice of it to be given them, that if any thing new could be produced, they might do it in time. They came to him at once, as to a man who protected them. He went with them himself to the judge. Notwithstanding all these good offices they were condemned; but the saint paid the expenses of the suit; in the evening, he again gave them their supper, lodged them, and did not send them away the next morning, without furnishing each one with the means of going home.

The examples of gratitude which he has left are no less touching. Without speaking of that which he entertained towards God, and which extended not only to the benefits which he personally received, but also to those which all creatures daily receive; that which he manifested towards men, went so far that it is almost impossible to convey a just idea of it. A man who assisted him to mount his horse, a

child who showed him the road, a stranger who paid him a visit, often troublesome, was sure of thanks, and even of liberality. If any thing were calculated to make him forget the austerity of the rules he had prescribed for himself, it would have been the spirit of gratitude, the weight of which bore him down. The priest who, as we have said, plunged into the water to bring him out, having lost his first fervor and quitted his state of life, wished to return to it. He wrote letters upon letters; but, seeing that the saint, who feared that his volatile disposition might soon make him repent of his very repentance, turned a deaf ear to him, he attacked him in the most sensitive part, I mean, on the score of gratitude. The decisive words of his last letter were these: "Sir, I once saved the life of your body, save that of my soul." On reading these words, the saint was moved. The opportunity of exercising a precious virtue, joined to the perseverance of the person in whose favor it was to be exercised, overcame him at last. "Come, sir," replied he, "and you shall be received with open arms." He would have been, in fact, had not God, satisfied with the preparation of his heart, taken him off at the time he was preparing to set out.

Never did man experience the effects of a well timed service, more than Adrien Le Bon. No; never did the most tender son do for his father, what Vincent did for the former prior of St. Lazarus. But, under the name of this excellent benefactor, we must also comprise all those connected with him. For two or three years, the saint fed a person, who, full of fantastical notions, was running about all day, passed a part of the night in writing his ravings, and was unwilling to do any thing. Vincent, to whom complaints were brought of him more than once, only replied: "He is to be pitied; but he has served one of our principal benefactors: will God find fault with us for acknowledging in the person of the servant, the feelings which we entertained towards the master?"

But what was the result of such persevering, such Christian patience? Something miraculous. That poor domestic became the example and consolation of the whole commu-

nity. He waited on the sick with a respect and affection which cannot be expressed. Being asked by a person how he would serve our Lord, if he were still upon earth, he replied: "I would serve him as I serve you; for I serve you as I would wish to serve him." See, says the author of the memoir from which we extract this, one of the fruits of the gratitude of Mr. Vincent. It was admirable; it was just that it should produce admirable effects.

But the effects of the saint's gratitude were not always so happy. His priests at Rome were near being driven from thence at the instigation of Mazarin, for having helped the Cardinal de Retz, who had sought an asylum there. "Let the will of God be done," said the holy man; "but it is better to lose every thing, than the virtue of gratitude."

These last words show us how much Vincent of Paul was detached from the goods of this earth. This testimony is furnished by every one, who paid a little attention to his character. "In quality of secretary of state," said M. le Tellier, "I had great intercourse with Mr. Vincent. He has done more good works in France for religion and the church, than any person I have known. But I remarked particularly, that in the council of conscience, of which he was the principal agent, his own interest, or that of his congregation, was never brought in question."

This great detachment was the first virtue which appeared in him; and, what does not always happen, it continued to his extreme old age. It will be remembered that he was yet a child, when he gave all his little treasure to a poor person; that he had nothing, when he left his abbey to labor in the country; that a year of entreaty could not determine him to accept the house of St. Lazarus, and that he would have abandoned it, when the gentlemen of St. Victor contested it, had he not been assured that he could not do so in conscience.

This was known to the public before the publication of this history. But it was not known that Mr. Le Blanc, one of his priests, wishing to leave an annual revenue to the house of St. Lazarus, the man of God begged him to bequeath it to his family, which he did. It was not known, that,

although reduced to extreme necessity, Vincent once refused five hundred crowns, saying that two thousand poor, who were sick at the Hotel-Dieu, had still more need of them than he. It was not known, that the attorney of the king in a large city, having given him property of which he was the entire master, Vincent restored it to his relations, because they were not pleased at the donation. Finally, it was not known, that he refused sixty thousand pistoles which were offered him to build a church, because by accepting them, he might have done an injury to the poor of Jesus Christ.

This detachment from the goods of this earth gave rise in him to so great a love of poverty, that his age has scarcely witnessed ecclesiastics who carried it so far. His dress was as common as it could be. His food corresponded to his clothing. The only distinction between him and his companions was his more austere penance. As to his lodging, it was the most pitiful thing that can be imagined. A chamber without fire-place, a bed without curtains, a pallet without a mattress, two straw bottomed chairs, and a wooden crucifix constituted all his furniture. "I acknowledge," says Jean Baptiste Chomel, the first physician of the king, in his deposition, "that I was completely astonished, when I saw a man of such merit and reputation, lodged so miserably, and having only such furniture, as he could not absolutely dispense with."

It may be well imagined that this great lover of poverty, endeavored to inspire his children with the love of it. "It is true," said he to them, "that we are not religious, because it was not thought proper that we should be so, nor are we worthy to be so; but it is not less true that poverty is the bond of communities and particularly of ours. It is this bond, that, separating them entirely from the things of earth, will unite them perfectly to God. . . . A man who has the true spirit of poverty, fears nothing; he can do every thing; he goes every where. He thinks himself happy in following the example of the Saviour, who began by a manger and finished with the cross."

It was from this love of the cross that sprung up in Vin

cent the spirit of mortification, now-a-days so little known. But with him that mortification had for its object every thing that could serve as matter for it. The judgment, the will, the inclinations of the heart, the senses, in a word, body and soul, all were immolated. He had an air naturally severe; he reformed himself so much, that from his retreat at Soissons he always passed for a model of mildness and affability. He related facts with much grace, and a person who relates well, and knows much, is willing to speak; however, he knew so well how to keep silence, when circumstances did not require him to speak, that a secretary of the king, who had been a slave at Algiers, and who knew very well that Vincent had been so at Tunis, led him more than twenty times towards the subject, without ever being able to draw from him one word in relation to his captivity. He loved his family so tenderly, that having seen with his own eyes the poor state in which it was, three months of reflection could not mitigate the trouble he felt. Yet he overcame it so far as to say to his brethren, according to the Scripture: "I know you not," because he knew poor persons more to be pitied than they, and he looked upon a middling fortune as a germ of sanctification. In fine, he had so well buried the old man with his desires, that Mr. Almeras, his successor, who had studied him a great deal, could discover neither inclination nor bent in him.

It was not altogether so with his exterior mortification. Whatever precaution he took to conceal one portion of it, and disguise the other, it has been sufficiently known, to give him a distinguished place amongst the most illustrious penitents. The following was his invariable course during more than forty years.

He seldom went to bed till towards midnight, for the great affairs with which he was loaded, did not permit him to repose sooner. A miserable pallet was his bed, and five years before his death he had the sheets taken off. Whether he had slept or not, whether he was in good health, or had the fever, which often happened to him, he always rose at four o'clock in the morning, and took the discipline. To it he joined, particularly in times of public calamity, the hair shirt, and pointed

copper bracelets and cinctures. His hair shirt, which still exists, makes even those accustomed to mortification tremble. An enemy and almost a murderer of his body, in the most severe weather he kept his hands exposed to the cold, to the impressions of which he was very sensible. His food was of the coarsest kind; and what was least palatable in his portion was always chosen by him; he sprinkled on it from time to time bitter powders which made it very disagreeable. He generally fasted twice a week; and neither old age or his infirmities could make him lose the habit. At upwards of eighty years, he fasted throughout lent more rigorously than a robust man in the flower of his age. Yet, this is but a part of his mortification; and he carried it so far that the Cardinal of la Rochefoucault, to preserve a life so precious to the church, begged him to moderate it.

A man, who bore so continually in his body the mortifications of Jesus Christ, must naturally have had a great command over himself, and be eminently pure. Neither error, or calumny which serves it as a guard, have ever undertaken to assail him on the score of the amiable virtue of which we here speak. It is true that to remove even the shadow of danger, he always took the strictest precautions. He never paid a visit to any woman, not even the ladies of his assembly, but when the glory of God required him to do it; in this respect Madame Le Gras was treated like the rest. In the conversations which he was obliged to hold with females, he was very precise, and so modest, though without affectation, that he would rather be taken for an angel than a man. Though sick, and more than eighty years of age, he always had a companion who did not lose sight of him. This person having once retired through respect for the lady of Marshal de Chombert, the saint recalled him instantly and made him sensible of his fault. Although he often had to deal with persons who stood in need of consolation, he was always unacquainted with those affectionate expressions which heal one evil only by another. Such were his maxims; and he repeated them so often, both to his missionaries and to the Sisters of Charity, that, did we not know that purity resembles those

costly mirrors which a light breath will sully, we would believe that his precautions were excessive.

But what he did to preserve spotless purity for his children, he did at all times to preserve it for innumerable persons who were in immediate danger of losing it. It is to him that Lorraine, where his name should never die, is indebted for its virgins, whom he preserved from shipwreck. It was under his auspices, that two holy and illustrious widows, de Poaillon and Le Gras, opened their houses to thousands, who were at the last extremity, and the loss of whose innocence would have been caused by one day's delay. It was he who, in establishing by his lessons and credit, good order among the Daughters of Magdalen, made of a seat of murmurings a place of sweet and peaceful tears. In fine it was he who, when almost at the end of his career, formed a still more extensive project, which was executed after his death.

If these glorious undertakings prove his love for purity, they do not less prove his strength and courage. Hence the great Lamoignon, who admired him in every thing, was particularly struck by his firmness, which he compared to that of the apostles; and the like justice was rendered him by Victor de Melian and the celebrated archbishop of Cambray. But what need is there of witnesses in a matter where one glance at the facts, becomes an incontestable proof? In fact, that a man who belongs to no one, has no other support than his virtue, in an age when virtue is little valued, and seeks on every occasion to vilify himself; that a man whose only policy is that of faith, who is charged with a rising congregation, still is incapable of availing himself either of the favor of the sovereign, or the employments which his merits have obtained for him; that a man who would sacrifice every thing rather than fail in the duties of gratitude, and who, far from disobliging through a principle of natural insensibility, never found himself more happy than when he could oblige; that a man of this character should speak truth even amidst the court; that he should not promise what his conscience would not permit him to fulfil; that he should withstand the most powerful sollicitations, threats, and injuries; that neither dan-

ger or persecution should ever induce him to take a false step ; that the most justly grounded tenderness should find him inexorable ; in a word, that in the course of a long life, it should never happen to him to say *yes*, when his duty obliged him to say *no* ; is in the eyes of reason and faith, a prodigy of firmness, of which the heroes of the world are incapable, except when they are Christian heroes likewise.

To be convinced that Vincent was the man whose portrait we have just drawn, it is sufficient to recollect the manner in which he acted, either with regard to Mr. Le Bon, when he endeavored to interest him in favor of a guilty abbess, and with regard to the queen herself in the affair of her first minister ; or the intrepidity with which he refused, to avoid compromising his conscience, high and proud ladies, sometimes magistrates, to procure benefices for their children ; or the courage with which he visited an old friend, not to congratulate him on the nomination of his son to a bishopric, but to conjure him to exclude him from it, because he was not worthy of it.

But what is this, in comparison with the strength which he stood in need of, to procure for ruined Lorraine and so many other provinces, assistance which could not possibly be procured but by the most invincible charity ; to sustain in spite of every one the establishment of the foundlings ; to send, and almost always at his own expense, into every part of the kingdom, and a great number of other countries, those endless colonies of missionaries, who watered them with their sweat, and more than once, with their blood ? We have given elsewhere the detail of those glorious missions ; but notwithstanding the monotony inseparable from it, piety is nourished by it. Being now limited within very narrow bounds, we shall only speak of those of Madagascar, Algiers, and two or three others.

MISSIONS OF MADAGASCAR.

Madagascar is one of the largest islands in the world, and the most extensive of those in Africa. Francis Cauche makes it eight hundred leagues in circumference ; and it had more than four hundred thousand inhabitants, when the first priests

of the mission arrived there. Of these inhabitants, some are black and natives of the island, others who are white and rule the country, are said to have come from Persia. Circumcision, which they call *Valascira*, prevails throughout the island. They have no temple. However, they admit a superior Being, whom they consider the master of the universe and the author of every good; but the devil to whom they attribute all the evils of life, is much more honored, because more feared. They always name him before God, and he has the greater portion of their sacrifices.

The priests, or those who approach nearest to them, are called Ombiasses. The people fear them on account of their books, or rather on account of certain figures which they have put in them, and by means of which they pretend to cure diseases, foretell the future, find lost things, and even restore the mind when disordered. But of all the superstitions of the country, the most difficult to root out is the worship they pay to the *Obys*, that is to say, to certain idols rudely fabricated by the Ombiasses, some of which represent men, and others grotesque figures. They believed these little pagods to be animated by a familiar spirit, and they ask of them whatever the Christians ask of the true God, health, good weather, victory over their enemies, above all, that they may not be devoured by the crocodiles, with which their rivers are infected. When any one is caught by them, the only reason they give, is that his *Obys* was good for nothing. Happy would they be, if they were to pronounce the same judgment on all the others; but they are so head-strong on this point, that they can scarcely suffer any one to undeceive them.

I do not know that any nation carries the superstition of times, as far as they do. March and April, the eighth day, and last week of each month, are unlucky times. Every child born then, runs a great risk of its life; and to prevent the disasters which would not fail to fall upon it and the family, they hasten to expose it under a hedge, where it is often the prey of wild beasts. If a woman dies in child-birth, the living child is buried with her. Those who have a very painful delivery, cause the child to be strangled, because, having so

early caused the mother to suffer so much, it would necessarily have a very bad disposition. A female slave whose master neglects the children, buries them, or throws them into the river, to save herself the trouble of nourishing them.

Such were the people, with whom the missionaries sent to Madagascar by our saint, had to deal. It is true, that the country was not then so well known as it was afterwards. A pretty advantageous opinion of those islanders was entertained at Rome and in France; and when Vincent first wrote of them, he spoke as of a people who lived, it is true, in ignorance of the true God, but who were simple, upright and skilful. He had been deceived. There is not in the whole world, a nation so crafty and perfidious. With the exception of the inhabitants of the province of Antongil, who believed themselves descendants of Abraham, and who are less inclined to betray, all the rest are acquainted with nothing but fraud, atrocity, and the most cruel vengeance. They give no quarter to their enemies. They satisfy upon the children the rage with which they were possessed against the fathers, and when they fall into their hands, they cut them in two without mercy. If they are pardoned an injury, their constant rule is to do still worse than before. Perhaps they would have been less vicious, and their old habits might by degrees have been eradicated, had they not found in the Christians of Europe the worst models of injustice and corruption.

In order to clear this wretched land, Vincent chose two excellent laborers, Charles Nacquart de Campmartin, of the diocese of Soissons, and Nicholas Gondrée, of the diocese of Amiens. He gave them excellent advice, and begged them earnestly to form their conduct upon that of the holy apostle of the Indies. To walk at a distance at least in the footsteps of that great man, they made successful trials of their talents and vocation at la Rochelle, where they were obliged to remain for a month. With the consent of the bishop, they employed the best part of the time in catechising the poor, hearing their confessions, and serving every way the prisoners and the sick of the hospitals.

Finally, on the 21st of May, Ascension day, they set sail.

They had scarcely left the port, when, after the gospel of the mass which was celebrated at sea that very day, Mr. Nacquart addressed a solid exhortation to all the crew. He represented to them that they would have nothing to fear from the fury of the ocean, if by a holy life they would procure the favor of him, who commands the sea and the tempest.

To dispose them to a life worthy of God, the zealous missionary commenced the jubilee which Innocent X had just granted to the faithful, to obtain that heaven would put an end to the frightful discord, which reigned amongst Christian princes, and by which the great enemy of the Christian name, the grand Turk, was desirous of profiting. Gondrée and Nacquart caused twenty-six persons who were in the ship to make general confessions, and they admitted those who were found worthy, to the participation of the divine mysteries. The passengers of a small vessel of Dieppe which was in their company, and had anchored with them at Cape-Vert, begged a participation in the grace which they had just granted to the others. They labored for that purpose on the eve of St. John the Baptist, and had the consolation to reconcile a considerable number; but they were so unhappy as not to be able to render the same service to twelve black Portuguese, on account of not understanding their language.

As soon as they had re-embarked, the exhortations, catechisms, and pious readings re-commenced. The spirit of God showed itself so powerfully, that the ship appeared like a regular community. All swearing, every indecent word was banished. Whoever indulged in either, underwent on the spot a species of punishment which had been agreed upon.

Hitherto every thing had prospered wonderfully; but when they were near the line, the winds became so contrary, that the captain and his mariners thought at last they had no choice but to seek a harbor. Nacquart, who was looked upon by the whole crew as a saint, was opposed to it. He had recourse to Him who draws the winds from his treasures. After his example all those in the vessel made a public vow to approach the sacraments about the time of the Assumption, to build a church at Madagascar under the invocation of the

queen of heaven, and to give alms. Such Christian sentiments found favor with God: the wind changed; and after a voyage of six months and a half, they discovered Madagascar.

As soon as they landed, Nacquart went on his knees to offer the island to God, and to take spiritual possession of it in his name. He said mass at fort Dauphin, where, for want of matter for consecration, it had not been said for five months. The next day he said a solemn mass of thanksgiving. It was followed by a *Te Deum*: and the governor, who had come with them, assisted to it with those belonging to the vessel.

The missionaries began their labors by the domestics of the faith. They endeavored to dispose the soldiers of the fort, to gain the indulgence of the jubilee. But it would appear that their success did not correspond to their good intentions. With the exception of some officers who feared God, there was neither order nor justice in the quarter of the Europeans. The most atrocious robberies were committed with impunity. The cattle of the natives was taken by force: they were massacred without mercy, when they did not give it cheerfully: they treated as an outrage upon temporals, the representations and complaints of a conduct so contrary to justice and humanity.

A manner of proceeding so violent, joined to the bad inclinations of the natives, must naturally have done, and in fact did much harm to the propagation of the gospel. It must however be acknowledged, that the commencement furnished some hopes apparently well founded. Some months after landing, Nacquart learned that a *diam*, that is, one of the lords of the island, had lived at Goa in his youth. He paid him a visit, hoping that a man, who had seen the Christian religion, would be less averse to it than another. His conjecture was found sufficiently grounded. Andiam Ramach, for this was the name of this lord, acknowledged that he had been a Christian, and willingly permitted the missionary to instruct his vassals. To enable himself to dispense with an interpreter, the apostolical man began to study with all his might the language of the country, and made considerable progress in it in so short a time, that the islanders were surprised at it. He

afterwards made excursions into the neighboring country, and into more distant provinces. Notwithstanding the pride of the blacks of that island, who, because they have the religion of the Alcoran, in some of the provinces, think themselves far superior to the negroes, Nacquart, who had already the consolation to see whole cantons render justice to the beauty of the Christian religion, thought himself on the point of reaping the fruits of his labors, when an unforeseen accident set bounds to his zeal, and dissipated a portion of his hopes.

Gondrée having, through obedience, followed some French officers on a journey, they paid so little attention to him, either as regarded the travelling or food, that he fell sick, and was obliged to retrace his steps; nor did they even think of contributing any thing to his comfort on his way back. Soon after his arrival at the fort, Nacquart, who never lost sight of him, except when his functions called him elsewhere, was obliged to administer to him the last sacraments. The virtuous priest received them with all possible piety; and after having twice repeated to his associate, that he would have much to suffer in that miserable country, he expired in sentiments of perfect submission to the will of God, and a lively gratitude for the favor which Vincent of Paul had done him, in choosing him before so many others to announce the gospel to the infidels.

Such a mournful separation was a terrible blow for Mr. Nacquart. From that moment he looked upon himself as a victim, whom affliction and excess of labor was about to immolate gradually. However, as his sorrow was tempered by religion, he did not yield to it so far as to forget his duties. To procure for those who labored with him a facility, which he had not found on arriving in Madagascar, he translated into the language of the country an abridgement of the Christian doctrine. Although he could scarcely absent himself five or six days, as he had to perform the office in the fort on Sundays and festivals, he overran the valley of Amboul, the country of Anos, and a chain of mountains which were not very distant. During the day he instructed those who remained in the villages, and in the evening by moonlight those who re-

turned from labor. He pictured to them in so vivid a manner the judgment, and hell which is the consequence of it for the wicked, that the people and the lords cried out in concert: "Where then is that water which washes the soul, and which you have promised us?"

These words, and the dispositions which seemed to accompany them, moved him more than once to tears; but he stopped short, when he considered that these people, naturally volatile, changed their ideas almost as quickly as their habitations; that the bad Christians injured them more by their example, than he could benefit them by his preaching; and that he being alone and liable to succumb at every moment, men still tender in the faith would be in danger of soon returning to their superstitions, if abandoned to themselves. Thus during more than eighteen months, he scarcely baptized more than fifty persons. Of those, a very old woman, who was dangerously sick, gave him much consolation. Scarcely had she received baptism, when her faith, her love, and gratitude for God redoubled. She died some days afterwards, and she was the first islander buried in the French cemetery.

Hence, a judgment may be formed of the ardor with which this worthy priest called for aid. "Alas!" cried he with St. Francis Xavier, "what are so many doctors now doing, who lose their time in the academies, whilst so many poor infidels ask for bread, and find no one to distribute it to them? May the sovereign master of the harvest provide for it; for unless there be a number of priests here to instruct, and preserve the fruit of the instructions, but little progress can be expected." These are the expressions of the letter which this perfect missionary wrote in 1650 to Vincent of Paul, to apprise him of the death of Mr. Gondrée.

That news afflicted the servant of God very much. Besides his losing an excellent laborer in the person of the deceased, he saw himself in danger of losing Mr. Nacquart also, who would naturally fall under the weight of such excessive labor. After having adored the designs of God, which although terrible are always just, he thought of supplying the loss

of Mr. Gondrée. Jacques Monnier, who burned with the desire of giving his blood for the salvation of the infidels, and Toussaint Bourdaise, a man full of good will, were those to whom he gave the preference. But the troubled state of the country detained them in France until 1654. In order to spare men of such merit, Vincent whose charity redoubled with age, caused three others to depart the following year. They were Messrs. Dufour, Prévot, and De Belleville, three priests of great capacity and tried virtue. They did good; but, O the depths of the judgments of God! they scarcely commenced that for which they had been destined. The first letter which our saint received from Mr. Bourdaise, a letter which breathed sorrow in every line, related in substance that on arriving at Madagascar, he found nothing but the ashes of Mr. Nacquart de Champmartin; that six months afterwards he had lost Mr. Monnier; that Mr. de Belleville, with whose name and virtues alone he was acquainted, had died on the voyage; that Mr. Prévot had followed him, after having survived the fatigues of the passage; that he had only seen Mr. Dufour to be acquainted with the value of that which he was to lose. "In fine," said Mr. Bourdaise, "all those of your children whom you sent to Madagascar are dead, and I am the wretched servant left alone to tell you of it. However, afflicting as it may be, you will not fail to be consoled at knowing the holy lives which they led, as well at sea as on shore, and the great blessings which God granted to their labors from the time they left France."

Bourdaise then relates that the passengers had given him an account of the zeal and virtues of these worthy missionaries. This was opening a new source of tears for the holy priest, at a time when he had too much reason to shed them. For some months back, all the letters which he had received bore the impress of grief and death. He had just lost seven of his company, in the city of Genoa, who had fallen victims to their labors in the pestilence. He believed himself on the point of seeing all those who labored in the Hebrides, fall under the blows of the pitiless Cromwell. Of so many priests sent successively to Madagascar, Bourdaise alone remained,

or rather Bourdaise remained no longer, for he was dead at the time his letter was received announcing the death of all his brethren. Such multiplied inflictions, so sensible at an age, when the vigor of man is quite exhausted, should naturally have brought him to the grave. But he found in his submission to the orders of God, resources superior to the laws of nature. It was in vain they sought to persuade him that the time of mercy was not yet come for Madagascar; he replied "that God often gives to perseverance the success which he has refused to the first efforts; that six hundred of those islanders, who had already received baptism from the hands of a single missionary, sufficiently proved that these people were disposed to receive the light of the gospel; that finally it would be violating all the laws of charity and reason, to abandon a servant of God who cried out for help and a people who asked only to be instructed.

Actuated by these motives, the saint resolved to send a new colony to Madagascar. But the career of his zeal opened a very vast one to his patience. The two first priests whom he sent to Nantes could not embark there, because the vessel in which they were to go was lost. Some time after he sent four others; but the Spaniards having captured the ship, they were obliged to return to France. Finally, the servant of God, about a year before his death, caused five to depart, who, in spite of the dangers of so painful a mission, had conjured him in every possible manner, to destine them for it. When they had arrived at Nantes, they learned that they would have to embark at La Rochelle: three of them went thither by land; the superior, whose name was Mr. Estienne, wished to go by sea with a brother; but the vessel, when about to enter the river of Bordeaux, lost her masts and sails in a terrible storm which arose. A young parisian who, seeing her on the point of striking on a rock, found means to save himself, wrote to his mother that he saw her swallowed up by the waves. Different letters from Nantes and other places confirmed the accident, and the three missionaries who learned it on arriving at La Rochelle, informed Vincent of it.

Accustomed as was that holy man to the strangest revolu-

tions, this must have struck him, and more than any other. He could not have met with a greater loss. Estienne, though very young, had all the qualifications of an apostle. He knew no other happiness upon earth, than that of extending the faith of Jesus Christ. And to effect that object, particularly in infidel countries, he had already sacrificed nearly forty thousand livres of his property. On the other hand, Philip de Moucy, counsellor of state, his brother-in-law, and his other relations, did not fail to complain of an expedition so fatal to a man whom they cherished. All these reflections lacerated the heart of the holy priest. But his firmness did not abandon him. He did not show a dark and sorrowful countenance; and as he wished to take time, to announce such afflicting news to his community, no one perceived his grief in the interval which preceded the day he had chosen to speak of it.

In the mean time, to profit by the embarkation, he secretly disposed another priest, to take the place of the one he so much regretted. At the time when this new superior was ready to set out, Vincent received by post several packets of letters, and amongst them two the address of which very much resembled the hand writing of Mr. Estienne. They were really from him. Both concurred in saying that the vessel in which they sailed from Nantes, had been for fifteen days in danger of perishing; that the captain and the sailors looking for nothing but death, had thrown themselves at his feet, and asked absolution; that after having given it to them, they trusted that they would not perish; that on the day of the octave of the immaculate conception, they had all made a vow to approach the sacraments, to say or cause to be said twelve masses, to clothe twelve poor persons in honor of the Blessed Virgin; that in fine, struggling against the winds and hunger, they had arrived at Saint Jean de Luz, whence he would make haste to be at La Rochelle before the departure of the vessels.

A father who had become acquainted with the resurrection of his only son, could not be more affected than Vincent was at such unexpected news. But accustomed as he was to see

God alone in all the events of life, he passed without sensible emotion from one extremity to the other. His joy was silent before men, as his sorrow had been. He cast himself at the feet of his divine master, and blessed him for life with as great peace as he had blessed him for death.

Estienne hastened immediately to La Rochelle to embark with his brethren. But as Vincent was no longer upon earth, when his first letters were received, and, as on the other-hand the labors of Mr. Estienne and the crown of martyrdom which God granted to his desires, deserve a particular history, I shall say nothing more of him. It will be sufficient to know that Louis XIV having abandoned that unfortunate island, in 1674, all the French were obliged to leave it; that of the four missionaries who were there at the time, one was killed by the negroes, another burned alive in his own dwelling, that the two others returned to France, and one of them, named Michael Montmasson, replaced in every sense, at Tunis, the illustrious Mr. le Vacher, that is to say, that he did infinite good, and that as a martyr, he was placed at the mouth of the canon, after having been loaded with insults and indignities. This naturally leads us to the missions of Barbary. We shall give but a very slight idea of them; but that idea will not fail to edify and console those who love religion.

BARBARY MISSION.

Vincent who knew by his own experience all that the Christian slaves at Tunis suffered, and the danger they were in of denying their faith to mitigate their sufferings, lamented before God his want of power to aid them, when Louis XIII made a proposition to him to that effect. The saint, who saw in that disposition the accomplishment of his desires, dispatched without delay Louis Guérin, a man who to an eloquence truly solid and full of unction, united all the virtues of an apostle, and above all, an ardent desire to suffer all that they suffered for the propagation of the gospel. Guérin having perceived, after two years' labor, that one man was not sufficient for the work, begged the Bey; or prince of the country, to permit him to call another priest to his aid. The

Mussulman granted his request cheerfully, and assured him of his protection. "For," added he, "I well know that you do evil to no one, but that on the contrary you do good to every body."

This worthy minister profited by this good will; and Vincent of whom he asked a companion, sent him Jean le Vacher, whose labors and glorious death did as much honor to religion, as the piety and erudition of the celebrated André Duval, his relation, had done to his family. Le Vacher arrived in very good time, because the pestilence, more violent than usual at Tunis, carried off every day a great number of Turks and slaves. These two priests labored on this pressing occasion with all imaginable zeal. But Mr. Le Vacher, seized by the disorder, soon found himself at the gates of death. God who had destined him to sanctify for more than thirty-five years the captives of Tunis and Algiers, restored him to the prayers of the Christians. "The joy we experienced at his recovery," wrote Mr. Guérin in 1648, "has made us as strong as the lions of our mountains."

That strength did not last long. Mr. Le Vacher had scarcely recovered, when his companion was attacked by the pestilence. He met death rather with cheerfulness than patience. If any thing afflicted him, it was that he should die in his bed, whilst he had always flattered himself with the happiness of being impaled or burned alive for the glory of his master. His death was shortly followed by that of the consul. The Bey, who loved Mr. Le Vacher, directed him to perform his functions, until the king of France should have appointed another.

This additional embarrassment did not make him forget the principal object, for which he had been sent to Tunis. His occupation, like that of his brethren, consisted in maintaining in the faith, those whom prayers, threats, and the weight of their chains were likely to withdraw from it; in bringing back, when possible, the renegades who had been so unfortunate as to lose it; in consoling afflicted persons, who, although most innocent, were treated as state criminals; in teaching them to sanctify their cross by uniting it to that of

Jesus Christ, and finally in administering the sacraments both in the city and the country.

That the reader may know how to appreciate such great benefits, it is proper to give him some idea of the situation of the Barbary slaves, and of the continual risks which those run who labor for their salvation.

As to the slaves, that is, the great number of Christians of every age, sex, and condition, who being captured by the Corsairs, are sold in open market, as beasts are elsewhere, it is certain that all are not equally ill-treated. There are some, whose condition nearly resembles that of the lowest domestics in France. But in addition to this being yet very hard for persons not accustomed to it, one who has to-day a reasonable master, may be sold two days hence to a furious tiger; whence it is evident that the greatest number of these poor captives are worthy of compassion.

Those who labor in the country are condemned to a destructive climate, to cut wood in the forests, to burn coal, or haul stone in the quarries, without a moment of relaxation. "At Biserte," said Mr. Le Vacher, "I found forty shut up in a stable so small that they could scarcely move. They were all chained in pairs, and obliged to grind day after day, with a small hand mill, a stated quantity of flour, which surpassed their strength."

Those of the cities serve sometimes on shore, and sometimes on sea. On shore, they are made to saw marble, but with so much fatigue that their tongues hang out like dogs'. At sea, they are obliged to row almost naked, in spite of the burning heat of the sun in summer, and the severe cold in winter: and upon the most trifling pretexts, they are loaded with blows by infamous renegades who perform the office of drivers. In such a cruel situation, the facility of breaking their chains, either by injuring their faith, or yielding to the abominable desires of a corrupted master, is a long and dangerous temptation; and how many during more than a century would have fallen, if the children of Vincent of Paul had preferred the tranquillity of Europe, to the often reiterated persecutions and infinite labors which awaited them in Africa?

Obliged to pay debts which they have not contracted ; loaded with irons and placed in the rank of slaves, when they cannot do it ; subjected to cruel bastinadoes ; placed at the mouth of the canon ; such is often the mournful but glorious recompense of their ministry. The poisoned air of the bagnios, the pestilence attached to the climate, oppression on the part of an inhuman people ; these are the flowers which those who are best treated, have to gather : thanks to heaven, these flowers have never failed to produce fruit. Although obliged to suppress a great portion of it, I shall say enough to edify those who have the courage of finding well done some things they have not done themselves.

As amongst those who are destined for those painful missions, there is always one who has the honor of being vicar apostolic, the priests and religious who are slaves, and are sometimes found in great numbers, are subjected to his authority. This canonical subordination prevents a multitude of evils. The seculars who are in slavery, having the goodness to pay to the masters of these ecclesiastics the monthly tax, the latter, who had scarcely any thing to do except to say their office, found themselves more at their own disposal in the midst of captivity, than they would have been under the eyes of their superior. Hence arose disorders, and sometimes scandals calculated to terrify both Jew and Mahometan.

The first good done in Barbary by the disciples of Vincent of Paul, was to put a stop to a licentiousness, odious every where, but much more so in an infidel country. Their good example, the wise regulations they published in the name and by the authority of the holy see, the censures which they even sometimes pronounced, but always with the proper precaution ; these means, sometimes mild, at others more rigorous, re-established order and discipline. The gentile no longer blasphemed God on account of his ministers, and the simple Christian found nothing in his guides, to authorize apostacy.

I know not whether this good, great as it is, can be compared with that which our missionaries did for all the captives. God alone knows the number they strengthened in

the faith and in the practice of the most exalted virtues; but every one is aware that before their arrival, the slaves, abandoned to themselves and to their cruel reflections, were in the most deplorable situation. Weighed down by the prospect of an endless captivity, the bitterness of which was assuaged by no one, some cut their throats or strangled themselves; others, in a paroxysm of fury, fell upon their masters to kill them, and in punishment of their revolt, were burned alive; a large number denied their faith, and to rid themselves of temporal sufferings, precipitated themselves into those of eternity. The priests of the mission arrested these excesses by moving discourses, by alms prudently distributed, and above all, by the administration of the sacraments, which are the sources of strength and salvation. If the new church of Africa was less numerous than the ancient one, it gave, and still often gives to the Son of God, confessors and martyrs, whom the most holy bishop of Carthage would have looked upon as his joy and his crown.

What is most surprising, is, that the exterior pomp of religion, its chaunt and its ceremonies, never cease there. Twenty-five bagnios, or thereabouts, which are in Algiers, Tunis, and Biserte, have become, by the voluntary savings of the poor captives, so many little temples, where those afflicted Christians have the consolation of hearing mass and participating in the divine mysteries. Jesus Christ is there night and day with his suffering members. The tabernacle where he reposes, is never without a lighted lamp. Every year, on Corpus Christi, and during the whole octave, he is exposed to public veneration; he is even carried processionally in the chapels, and is there followed by a crowd of people, whose rags do him more honor than purple and the diadem. Thus is verified, even in our days, in an infidel country, that expression of the royal prophet: "The Lord said to my Lord, . . . rule thou in the midst of thy enemies."

The forty hours' devotion and the jubilee are also known in Barbary, and produce there, as elsewhere, the usual miracles. There have been seen, in those days of salvation, hardened men who had lived for twenty and thirty years in the forgetfulness

of God, entering seriously into themselves, and becoming at last models of penance. Deserters of the faith, Frenchmen, Spaniards, and Italians, have then been seen detesting their apostasy and taking efficacious measures to repair it.

Although the Mahometans are not the main object for which our priests are sent to Barbary, it is however certain that some have been gained; but they have been much more happy with regard to Protestants. A single one of those worthy missionaries converted eighteen, and there is much reason to believe that his colleagues, who possessed no less zeal and talents, have been as successful, if not more so.

Amongst these conversions, there was one more remarkable than the others. It was that of a child who, being captured by the Corsairs on the coast of England, was sold at Tunis: we shall give an account of it, nearly in the terms in which Mr. Guérin wrote it to St. Vincent, in 1646. "Two Englishmen have been converted to our holy faith, and they are an example to all the other Catholics. There is a third, only eleven years old; he is one of the most amiable children, and one of the most fervent Christians. He continually invokes the Blessed Virgin, that through her he may obtain the grace to die rather than deny Jesus Christ. This his master uses every means to make him do. He has been twice beaten unmercifully on that account. On the last occasion he said to his master, whilst he was beating him: 'Cut off my head, if you will, for I am a Christian, and will never be any thing else.' He has protested to me several times that he would expire under the blows sooner than deny his divine Saviour. He might be ransomed with two hundred piastres, and he would be a second Bede, so great are his talents and virtue."

What Mr. le Vacher wrote to our saint, in 1648, is no less consoling. We shall give the substance of it.

There were at Tunis two children, about fifteen years old, one born in France, the other in England. Both had been carried away from their country, and sold to two masters who lived near each other. Age, neighborhood, and similarity of fortune, united them so closely, that two brothers could not love each other more. The English child was a

Lutheran ; the French, who was a Catholic, excited in him doubts about his religion. Mr. le Vacher completed the work ; but he did it so perfectly, that he declared in presence of the merchants of his nation, who had come to Tunis to ransom the captives of their sect, that he preferred to live and die a slave, rather than renounce the true religion.

These two young friends saw each other as often as possible. Their conversations usually turned upon the happiness of suffering a thousand deaths, rather than to deny their faith. Providence had great designs with regard to these two children, as was soon evident. Their masters took it into their heads, to force them to deny Jesus Christ. In the absence of reasoning, to which a good Mussulman does not pretend, they had recourse to bad treatment, and without regard either for their age or virtue, they carried their inhumanity to the last excess.

The young French lad, having been one day overwhelmed with blows, and left for dead upon the spot, his companion, who often stole away to console him, found him in this pitiable situation. He called him by his name, to ascertain whether he was still alive. The sound of his voice awoke him from his insensibility ; but as he was not perfectly conscious of what had happened, and did not know why he was called, his first words were a profession of faith : "I am a Christian for life," replied he. At these words the little English boy threw himself at his feet, and bruised and bloody as they were, kissed them with respectful tenderness. Some Turks who surprised him in the act, having asked him what he was doing there : "I honor," replied he, like a man prepared for every event, "I honor the members which have just suffered for Jesus Christ, my Saviour and my God." This answer, which they did not expect, caused him to be injuriously driven away. It was a real affliction for the French lad, who was much consoled by his presence.

As soon as he was able to walk, he paid a visit to his friend. He found him in the same condition in which, a short time before, he had himself been found ; that is to say, stretched upon a mat, half dead from the blows he had received,

and surrounded by Turks, who feasted their eyes upon the cruel spectacle. At the sight, his courage and faith were re-animated, he approached his friend, and asked him, in presence of the infidels, which he loved better, Jesus Christ or Mahomet. "Jesus Christ," replied the English boy aloud; "I am a Christian, and I will die a Christian."

A Turk, who had two knives in his belt, becoming desperate at this discourse, threatened the French lad to cut off his ears. He had already advanced to do it, when the young hero showed him that he could not be frightened at such a trifle. Without deliberating, he flew to the instrument with which he was threatened, himself cut off one of his ears, and asked those barbarians if they would have him cut off the other. They then learned that neither sword nor torment could separate from the Son of God, a Christian who truly belongs to him. Astonished and confused, they left these two youths in peace, and no longer spoke to them either of Mahomet or of the Alcoran. He who from the high heavens had been witness of their combats, did not delay crowning them. The following year a contagious disorder carried them both off: "*Fortiores leonibus, in morte quoque non sunt divisi*" (2 Reg. i).

To these moving examples, I might add those of a new Joseph, who, being calumniated by his lewd mistress, suffered the most rigorous torments; and of two other slaves, one of whom was impaled at Tunis, and the other burned alive at Algiers, for being unwilling to yield to a passion still more abominable; and of a fourth, who, after having been circumcised to avoid the galleys of the grand signior, from which there is no egress, trampled under his feet, in presence of the bashaw who had seduced him, the turban which he had received, and being reconciled a moment before his death by Mr. Le Vacher, suffered with heroical intrepidity the torment of fire. But what we have said, is enough to show that Vincent of Paul procured for Barbary advantages, which, to be rightly esteemed, need no pompous expressions, much less exaggeration. A man who, by the means of three or four priests, knows how to restrain a great number of ecclesiastics, seculars or regulars; to strengthen twenty or twenty-five thou-

sand slaves in the faith ; to cause, in spite of the most frightful torments, those who had abjured Christianity, to renounce Mahomet ; to recall to the unity of the church those whom the prejudices of education had separated from it ; a man of this character, and that man was Vincent of Paul, would merit the respect of the Christian world, even if he had done nothing more.

Yet this was not the limit of his zeal. I do violence to myself in suppressing the missions which he made at the solicitation of Louise Marie de Gonzaga, in every part of Poland, where his priests had to struggle against the horrors of war, pestilence, famine, and the Socinian heresy, which had established its seat in these regions, and which, notwithstanding the great number of seductive volumes it produced, subsists there no longer. Yet, I believe, I must say a word of those which he caused to be undertaken in the territories of the republic of Genoa, in Ireland, and in Scotland. We shall see that these may be put in competition with those of which we have already spoken.

MISSIONS IN THE ISLAND OF CORSICA AND IN PIEDMONT.

The island of Corsica belonged to the republic of Genoa. Its inhabitants had always been looked upon as a people without morals, faith, or honesty. Brave to excess, they were furiously quarrelsome and vindictive, unwilling to pardon, or listen to terms of accommodation. They must be revenged. Every relation of their enemy, even to the third degree, through a fiction of right, was thought to be guilty of the injury they had received. Thus there was no security for a family, one of the members of which had committed a fault. All had to be on their guard. Wo to the first who was surprised ! his ignorance, even his absence, did not excuse him ; and one who, on leaving his house in the morning, was on good terms with every body, became guilty by sleeping in the house of the offenders, and was consequently assassinated in the evening, before he returned home. To merit this cruel treatment, those atrocious injuries which push pa-

tience to extremity, were not necessary ; a word stronger than usual was sufficient ; a word badly received was a crime worthy of death ; and it was to be in a condition to take prompt vengeance, that the Corsicans always went armed, as if they had been in a state of war.

Ferocity, or rather barbarity, was not the only vice which reigned in this unfortunate country, when the children of Vincent of Paul were called thither. Ignorance, impiety, concubinage, incest, robbery, perjury, prohibited marriages, the most scandalous divorces, were so many monsters which laid it waste.

For a long time the cry of so many crimes had been heard at Genoa, upon which those islanders were dependant. But crime had so strongly intrenched itself, that it seemed very difficult to attack it. The good which the priests of the mission were actually doing in the territory of the republic, induced the principal members of the senate to think that these apostolic men would not be useless in Corsica, and that if they could not plant all the virtues in that soil, they might at least root out many vices. With that view, these prudent magistrates begged Vincent of Paul, in a letter replete with piety, to have compassion on a people, who, criminal as they were, had cost the Saviour his blood and his death. The glory of God, and the salvation of souls were in question ; the saint did not hesitate. He sent seven of his priests, and although of the seven bishoprics of Corsica, only those of Mariana and Nebbio were suffragans of Genoa, Cardinal Durazzo joined with these seven missionaries, eight other ecclesiastics, four of whom were religious, the other four seculars.

As soon as these fifteen evangelical laborers had landed, they set to the work. Hard as it was, they made four missions ; the first at Campo Lauro, where the bishop of Aleria usually resides ; the second at Cotone ; the third at Coste, which is in the middle of the island, and the fourth at Niolo. As there is something more interesting connected with the last, we shall speak of it particularly, after having given a general account of the three others.

The first fruit which they produced, was the conversion of

a number of ecclesiastics, who were worth but little, and consequently were worse than the people. Every day, after the sermon, they were assembled in the church. The superior of the mission instructed them in the duties of their state. His discourse was followed by a meditation, when, each one entering into his own heart, found there sufficient subject for lamentation. This self-examination, which, when well conducted, leads to the reformation of manners, produced salutary effects. The clergy, as well as the people, made general confessions. All took a firm resolution to acquit themselves thenceforward, with all possible fidelity, of their duties to God and their neighbor. Several curates publicly asked pardon for the scandal they had given. A chapter in a body thought that the same edification should be given by them, and they deputed one of the canons to do it in the name of all the others.

The second fruit of these exercises was the extinction of hatred and animosities. Sacrifices were carried in this respect as far as they could go. One pardoned the death of his father, another that of his son; this one the murder of his brother, that the massacre of her husband. Calumnious accusations were also forgiven, but in so Christian a manner, that people who had been menaced with the loss of reputation or life, wished neither the reparation of their honor nor indemnification. Nor were these important reconciliations to be counted by tens or twenties; there was not a village in which they did not amount to fifty, and in some they amounted to a hundred.

The cessation of criminal intercourse was another effect of these missions. Not only women, whose disorderly conduct was notorious, asked pardon publicly, but there were some who could only be reproached with what worldlings are every day guilty of, who thought, without being spoken to on the subject, that they ought to humble themselves before God and men for the freedom of their conduct, and their unguarded manners. This kind of general confession, whether indiscreet or not, which I shall not examine, caused the witnesses to shed abundance of tears; they served, moreover, to inspire

young persons with a just horror of crime, and of every thing that wears the appearance of it.

The last fruit of these missions was the establishment of the confraternity of charity, which, by procuring temporal and spiritual aid for a great number of poor sick persons, furnished those who ministered to them the means of redeeming their former iniquities.

The mission of Niolo was attended with circumstances which oblige us to speak somewhat more at large of it. We can do so with the greater confidence, as we have as security for the facts, a man replenished with virtue, who relates nothing but what happened under his own eyes.

"Niolo," he says, "is a long valley of nearly three leagues, and surrounded by mountains so difficult of access, that I have seen nothing equal, either in Savoy or in the Pyrenees. It is the difficulty of the roads that makes of Niolo the retreat of all the banditti of the island. Under cover of the rocks, they exercise with impunity their murders and robberies, fearless of the officers of justice.

"There are several small villages in this valley, and it contains about two thousand inhabitants. I have never seen, and I do not know that there are throughout Christianity, people more abandoned than these. When we arrived, their whole faith consisted in saying that they had been baptized, and all their religion amounted to their attending some churches which were very badly kept. They were so profoundly ignorant of the things of salvation, that it would have been very difficult to find there one hundred persons, who knew the commandments of God and the Apostles' Creed. Vice passed with them for virtue, and revenge was so rife, that the children, in learning to talk, learned also never to suffer the least offence to go unpunished. It was useless to preach the pardon of injuries to them; example and bad advice had made such deep impressions upon their minds, that they were not capable of receiving contrary ones.

"There were many who passed seven or eight months without hearing mass; others who had been three, four, eight, or ten years without going to confession; and some at the age of

fifteen or sixteen had never approached the tribunal of penance. With these vices, they necessarily had many others. They were much inclined to theft. They knew nothing of abstinence during lent, or on the other days on which it is commanded. They persecuted each other like barbarians; and when they had an enemy, their ordinary method was to lay some great crime to his charge, and have him brought to justice. False witnesses were never wanting, as many could be had for money at Niolo, as were needed. If the depositions of these were rendered useless by others obtained at the same price, the accuser and the accused took justice into their own hands; they killed one another on the first occasion, with the most astonishing facility.

“In that valley alone,” continues the author of the relation which I abridge to spare the imagination of the reader; “we found one hundred and twenty persons living in concubinage, about eighty of whom were in some degree guilty of incest. Forty of these had been excommunicated by name on that account. But the fear of censures did not prevent them from following their ordinary course. They lived and conversed with every body. Thus in this canton, a great portion of the inhabitants were excommunicated, some directly, others indirectly.

“This is the deplorable state in which these poor people were found, when the mission commenced, and these are the means which we took to remedy so many disorders.

“1. We used all possible diligence in instructing them in the things necessary for salvation; and for that purpose we employed nearly three weeks.

“2. We separated those living in concubinage who were upon the spot; and on the day of St. Peter, the patron of the church in which we were, all those miserable persons who acknowledged at length the wretched condition in which they had lived, having knelt down at the end of the sermon, publicly asked pardon for the scandal they had given, and promised with an oath to separate, which they in fact did, before approaching the tribunal of penance.

“3. After having thus separated those who were under censures for their crimes, they presented themselves with all

the marks of a contrite and humble heart at the door of the church, to receive absolution. It was solemnly imparted to them; but it was not given, until they had engaged by a public oath never to see one another on any pretence.

“The most arduous part of our labor was yet undone; we had to re-establish peace in a ferocious nation, the greater part of which was living in enmity: *Hoc opus, hic labor*. Our first efforts were entirely useless; and for fifteen whole days, we could gain but one young man, who pardoned another for having wounded him in the head by a pistol shot. All the others remained inflexible; and all that we could say produced no effect on any one. Notwithstanding these bad dispositions, there was always a great crowd at the discourses which we delivered every day, morning and evening. Never was there a more alarming auditory. All the men attended in their customary dress; that is, with a sword at their side, and a gun on their shoulder. But besides these arms, the banditti and other criminals had likewise two pistols, and two or three daggers in their belts. The spirit of vengeance so strongly possessed them, that the most moving instruction made no impression upon them. Many, indeed, when we spoke of the pardon of injuries, left the church.

“At length, on the eve of the day on which the general communion is usually made, as I was about to finish preaching, I again exhorted that unfortunate people to pardon. God then inspired me to take in my hand the crucifix which I carried about me, and to tell the assembly, that those who were willing to show mercy to their enemies, should come to kiss the feet of it. I conjured them to do so, on the part of a dying God, who stretched out his arms towards them; and I told them that this homage rendered to the Saviour, would be a proof of their will to be reconciled with those who had offended them. At these words, they began to look at each other; but as no one moved, I made a motion to retire, after having complained bitterly of their wonderful insensibility. A religious of the reform of St. Francis, who was present, was moved; and filled with a just and holy indignation, he began to cry out: ‘O Niolo! unfortunate Niolo! you will

perish then? you will be cursed by God? You are unwilling to receive the grace which he sends you by means of these missionaries who have come so far for your salvation.' He was still speaking, when a curate, whose nephew had been killed, came forward, prostrated himself on the ground, and asked to kiss the crucifix; then calling by name the murderer who was present, he said aloud, 'Let such a one approach that I may embrace him.' After this, another priest did the same with regard to some of his enemies; and these two were followed by such a multitude, that for the space of an hour nothing was to be seen but reconciliations and embraces. For greater security, the most important things were reduced to writing, and the notary authenticated them. O Lord!" exclaims the pious missionary to whom we owe this detail, "what edification for the earth, what joy for heaven to behold fathers and mothers pardoning for the love of God the death of their children; children that of their parents, wives that of their husbands, brethren and relations that of their nearest friends! What a consolation to behold implacable enemies embrace and shed tears over each other! In other countries, it is usual to see penitents shed tears at the feet of their confessors, but in Corsica it is a kind of miracle."

Thus terminated the important mission of Niolo. If, according to the maxim of the apostle of the Indies, a man who takes the trouble to go to the end of the world should not regret that step, if he be so happy as to prevent one mortal sin, what must we think of those who have the happiness to arrest or to suspend, at least for a time, the frightful disorders of which we have spoken. What gives new splendor to the mercy of God, is, that a little delay would have destroyed all. The next day the missionaries had orders to go to Bastie, where a galley sent expressly by the senate awaited them. They however deferred embarking for two days, and those two days were employed in putting a finishing hand to some reconciliations which had only been commenced. On Tuesday, one of them delivered a discourse on perseverance. There was so great a crowd of people, that it was necessary to preach outside of the church. There the pardon of injuries seemed no longer impos-

able. All renewed the protestations which they had already made, to lead a truly Christian life, and to persevere to the end. The pastors, who had much to reproach themselves with, promised aloud to be more faithful in fulfilling their obligations.

A rain which fell, prevented the missionaries from setting out the same day. It would appear as if this obstacle were interposed by Providence. At a league from Niolo there were two men whose brother had been killed. Both had so cruel a thirst for revenge, that, like the impious man spoken of in the book of Job (xv, 25), their souls were strengthened against the Almighty. For fear that grace would induce them to pardon, they had kept from all the exercises of the mission. All that their curate could obtain from them was, that they would suspend the effects of their resentment, until they had spoken to the director of the missionaries. The bad weather gave opportunity for that interview, which the orders of the senate would have prevented. It was completely successful. Those haughty spirits yielded to the holy zeal which was in search of them. They consented to forgive, and thus placed the seal on the public joy. A great number of ecclesiastics, and the principal inhabitants of Niolo conducted the missionaries to the place of their embarkation. The latter discharged their fire arms several times, as a mark of gratitude. It was a long time since they had put them to so moderate and so lawful a use.

I do not doubt that the pious reader would follow with pleasure those virtuous disciples of the humble Vincent in their expeditions into Piedmont, where He who is pleased to make use of the weakest instruments to confound the wisdom and strength of the heroes of the world, gave to their labors a benediction which he never bestows upon vain and frivolous eloquence. But a detail so consoling for those who love the glory of Jesus Christ, a detail which is amply furnished in the large life of our saint, could not, any more than many others, enter into such an abridgment as this. Therefore, without saying any thing of the success of these virtuous priests at Schalenghe near Pignerol, in the environs of Luzerne, where the largest churches could not contain their

hearers ; at Raconi, where they had the grief and the joy to behold poor people, who during a rigorous winter, were waiting for them at the doors of the church, during a portion of the night ; at Savigliano, where the people, the nobility, the secular clergy, and the religious of five or six convents profited with equal ardor by their instructions ; I shall be contented with speaking of the celebrated mission which they made at Bra, a large town of thirteen or fourteen thousand souls.

This place which is but a day's journey from Turin, was in a state of disorder equal to civil war, if it did not go beyond it. The streets were fortified, the houses filled with armed men, some of whom fired upon the passers by, others stood a siege against those who assailed them. The churches which, in Piedmont, as in the rest of Italy, serve as asylums for certain criminals, sheltered no one from the vengeance of his enemy : the citizen killed his fellow-citizen in the very temple of the Lord : in a word, Bra contained a mob of furious wretches who destroyed one another.

The time of such violent commotion was not suited for a mission. It would even have been very dangerous to commence it at that time : no one could have attended, without running the risk of his life : and five or six strangers, who had nothing but peace to announce, would have certainly been driven away by a desperate people breathing nothing but war. Christina of France, duchess of Savoy, who governed the state during the minority of Charles Emmanuel, her son, saw these obstacles. To overcome them, she sent her principal ministers to Bra, in order to induce to a suspension of arms those wretched inhabitants whom she could have destroyed by force, but whom she preferred to gain by mildness. Those ministers assembled the multitude ; they spoke with prudence and reason, and that was enough to render them unsuccessful.

The regent, the daughter of Henry the Great had firmness as well as mildness. After having spoken as a mother, she threatened as a sovereign. The hearts of the people were not softened, but hostilities were a little less active. It was the feeble glimmer of this diminution of animosity, that

the missionaries entered Bra. They were at once so happy as to induce the two parties to lay aside their arms, which they had not as yet done. So soon as they could go abroad with safety, and enter the church, the people flocked thither in crowds. Their assiduousness at the sermons and catechism consoled the priests of the mission very much. They were still more consoled, when they saw their hearts softened and disposed to peace. They were not long before concluding it. Those people, who a few months before, were animated by a spirit of vengeance, embraced one another in the presence of the blessed sacrament, after having asked pardon, both in the church, and in the public places; but in so tender, so affectionate a manner, that it was impossible to doubt the sincerity of their reconciliation.

This first step being taken, they went into the confessional. The crowd was there so great, that although all the priests and all the religious of the place united in their aid, the mission lasted seven weeks. There were from nine to ten thousand general confessions made. The spirit of piety breathed in all hearts, and effected every where that interior renovation which can only be its work. The time of the carnival, which is generally spent in folly and excesses, was there a time of penance, and like a continual feast of the greatest devotion. Peace was so solidly established, that the inhabitants did not remember even to have witnessed such union and cordiality. Her royal highness had already congratulated the missionaries in a very kind letter on the happy success of their labors; but when at the end of the mission the director rendered her a more detailed account of it, she was so much affected, that she could not restrain her tears. To complete so many advantages, she gave the inhabitants of Bra full pardon for all the crimes and excesses into which they had fallen during their divisions.

It is difficult to quit a subject so full of interest for religion as this is. But we must necessarily sacrifice a part, that we may not sacrifice another entirely. Let us then go from Italy into Ireland and Scotland. The scene is about to change. We shall not find the people armed against the peo-

ple. But piety will find enough to weep for on one side; and on the other, enough to praise the infinite mercies of the Lord.

MISSIONS IN IRELAND AND SCOTLAND.

It was at the solicitation of Innocent X, that St. Vincent sent missionaries into Ireland. As the circumstances of the times rendered this succor more necessary than ever, the saint, without delay, sent eight of his priests, some of whom on their arrival labored in the diocese of Limerick, the others in that of Cashel. The people of the country, who languished in profound ignorance, were made acquainted with the obligations which Christianity imposes upon its professors. They were vested with that spirit of strength which breaks the chains of sin, and teaches us to die for the faith in the time of persecution. The change of heart was so general and so sudden, that the bishops of Ireland could scarcely believe it. The nuncio whom the pope had still in that kingdom, congratulated those truly apostolical men on their zeal. The parish priests and other ecclesiastics, who were always the first to follow the exercises of the missionaries, seized so well their manner of catechising and instructing, that they preserved in their parishes the fervor of which those worthy priests had laid the foundation.

Never was fervor more necessary both for pastors and people. Oliver Cromwell, after having planned and executed the impious scheme which brought the king of England to the block, taught Ireland, which had proclaimed the prince of Wales under the name of James II, that his will was not to be opposed with impunity. Although the Catholics were not the only ones who detested the enormous crime of Cromwell, they had a greater share than any other persons in the misfortunes of the royalists. But there was not a single one of the pastors where the mission had been made, who abandoned his flock. All without exception remained, until banishment or a violent death separated them. It is known that one of the most fervent of those worthy pastors, after having made his annual confession to a missionary who was lodged in a poor hut at the foot of a mountain, was the night afterwards

taken and massacred by heretical soldiers, whilst administering the sacraments to the sick. His glorious death crowned a most innocent life. For a long time he had desired to shed his blood for the faith and for charity ; God thought him worthy of it, and his prayers were heard.

As the flames of persecution spread more and more throughout Hibernia, and it was no longer possible to make missions there, Vincent of Paul, who was informed of it, gave orders to five of his priests to recross the sea ; and to the other three, to remain at Limerick. The bishop proposed to them to make a mission in that city. The undertaking was pretty considerable. Limerick had then twenty thousand communicants, because a number of Catholic villagers had taken refuge in it. But of what are not three priests capable, when, assembled in the name of the Lord, they can calculate upon his being in the midst of them? Sustained by his grace, and encouraged by the prelate who placed himself at their head, these gentlemen announced judgment and mercy. The spirit of dread and compunction was at first insinuated amongst the people. Each one thought seriously of his conscience; and of twenty thousand persons capable of profiting by the mission, not one failed making a general confession. People who had grown old in sin, gave marks of true conversion ; and a numerous people was seen in a situation to serve as a model of the most exact penance.

Such holy dispositions could not have been manifested at a more proper time. The contagion soon reached Limerick ; and in a little time it was so violent, that it carried off nearly eight thousand persons. . Of this number was the brother of the bishop, who had exposed himself with the missionaries and like them, in consoling the sick and supplying their necessities. It was admirable to behold the patience, or rather the peace with which this afflicted people received the scourge with which God visited them. They died contented, "because, said they, " the Lord has sent us angels who have reconciled us to him." The pious bishop of Limerick, who, as a good father, knew better than any one else how to appreciate such holy dispositions, could not contain his tears. " Alas !" said

he a hundred times, "had Mr. Vincent done for the glory of God only the good which he has done for these poor people, he ought to think himself happy."

To the horrors of the contagion succeeded those of war. Ireton, the son-in-law of Cromwell, besieged Limerick, and at the end of four or five months became master of it. The army of the parliamentarians, inflated with their success, which, however, it owed to famine, naturally stained its victory: it made it a point of religion to do so. Many of the inhabitants were put to death, precisely because they preferred the ancient faith of the Roman church to the new faith of the English tyrant. Four of the principal citizens were of this number, at whose head was Thomas Strick, mayor of the city. These brave men went to the place of execution, like warriors to a triumph. Before execution they harangued the people according to the custom of the country; but they did it in so moving a manner, that the heretics themselves were melted to tears. They declared in the face of heaven and earth, that they died for the faith; and by that glorious acknowledgment they taught the Catholics who were present, that there was no death or torment that should separate them from the religion of their fathers.

Of the three missionaries who had remained in Ireland, only two returned to Paris, after having passed at Limerick, through all the terrors of pestilence and war. The third finished his career there; the others disguised themselves and escaped as they could. One of them retired to his own country with the grand vicar of Cashel. The other found in the mountains a pious woman who concealed him for two months. A brother who waited on them was less fortunate, or rather more so. The heretics having discovered his retreat, massacred him under the eyes of his mother. They broke his head, after having cut off his feet and hands; an inhuman and barbarous treatment, which taught the priests what they would have to expect, should they be seized.

These missionaries labored in Ireland, nearly six years; and with the exception of some help given them by the duchess of Aiguillon, it was the house of St. Lazarus, which through

the inexhaustible charity of its superior, supported the rest of the expense. Vincent, although reduced to extremity, did not regret it. More than eighty thousand general confessions, and other innumerable advantages, were ample indemnification for him. We should have been acquainted with much more, had his humility permitted it. But when the superior of these painful missions, on his return to Paris, asked him if it would not be proper to furnish a little relation of them, he answered, "that it was sufficient that God knew all that had been done; and that the humility of our Lord required of the little company of the mission, that it should keep hidden in God with Jesus Christ. He added that the blood of those martyrs would not be forgotten before God, and that sooner or later it would be the seed of new Catholics." Indeed that blood must have been very efficacious; for Ireland, although always oppressed by the most unjust persecution, still counts so great a number of zealous Catholics.

The saint was yet ignorant of the destiny of his missionaries in Hibernia, when he formed the design of sending others to the Hebrides. When we reflect, that at the same time he sent priests into Poland, Barbary, and Madagascar, and I know not how many other countries; that by the acknowledgment of the friends and even the enemies of his congregations, those worthy laborers had the most astonishing success every where; that the immense expenses of their voyages and their support fell principally upon him, can we well help saying what has been said, or rather what could not be said by illustrious historians, of the first of the Cæsars? What a man was that Vincent of Paul! what courage! what greatness of soul! what zeal for God! what detachment from every temporal interest! what talent for forming in a few years, sometimes in a few months, ministers ready to do every thing, and to suffer every thing under his orders! Those whom we have hitherto eulogised, appeared such to us; but their brethren, who are going to appear in their turn, will not appear to us less great, or less worthy of the choice which their first superior made of them. Let us begin by giving some idea of the country which they had to overrun.

The Hebrides are situated to the West of Scotland. There are but forty-four which merit attention. It appears that the greater part of them are barren, and generally speaking, that the inhabitants are very poor. This extreme indigence did not prevent their having Catholic priests before the English schism. The preachers who were substituted to them, soon became disgusted with their situation, as it was not sufficient for them to preach reform, but necessary to practice it. Hence the inhabitants by degrees had neither true nor false pastors. The exercise of all religion was insensibly abolished. Ignorance became so rife, that the necessity of baptism, or at least the manner of administering it was unknown; and, at the time of which we speak, old men were to be found in this unhappy country, of eighty and even of a hundred years, who had not been baptised.

As soon as Vincent was informed of the melancholy situation of these islanders, he made a proposition to two of his priests, one of whom was of that country, the other was an Irishman, to fly to their aid. The undertaking was a most hazardous one, in consequence of the violence of Cromwell and the troubles of the three kingdoms. The proposition was however accepted with joy and gratitude. Germain Duiguin and François le Blanc, upon whom the holy priest had fixed his eyes, disguised themselves as merchants, and took the route of Holland, from whence their departure would be less liable to suspicion. They met with a Scotch nobleman of the name of Clangary, a man illustrious for his birth and virtue, and who had lately embraced the Catholic religion. He took them at once under his protection, and always rendered them every good office.

They were scarcely in Scotland, when they believed themselves lost; for a priest who had become a minister, having recognised them, spread the news of their arrival by a circular letter which went the rounds of the whole kingdom. They argued nothing but what was sinister from this commencement; but God knew how to make it redound to his glory. The apostate, who was visited by a dangerous sickness acknowledged that the hand of God punished his

desertion and ill will. He deplored his error, promised God to atone for his fault, set out as soon as his strength would permit him, made a long journey in search of Mr. Duiguin, and received from him absolution of the censures which he had incurred by his apostacy.

Vincent of Paul was more than eighteen months, without receiving any accounts from these missionaries. At last a letter from Duiguin partly calmed his uneasiness. We shall give it somewhat abridged.

“God has granted us the favor, since our arrival in Scotland, to co-operate in the conversion of the father of Mr. Changary. He was an old man of ninety years of age, brought up in the heresy from his youth. We instructed him, and reconciled him to the church during a sickness which soon brought him to the grave, after however receiving the sacraments and manifesting unspeakable joy at dying a Catholic. I also reconciled, but secretly, several of his domestics and some of his friends. This being done, I left my companion in the mountainous parts of Scotland where the spiritual wants are great and much good can be done. I transported myself to the Hebrides, where God, through his all-powerful mercy, has effected wonders beyond every expectation; for he disposed the hearts so well, that Mr. Clanrenald, lord of a good part of the island of Vista, was converted together with his wife, his son and all their family, and the example has been followed by all the gentlemen, their vassals and families.

“I went afterwards to the island of Egga and Canna. God has there converted eight or nine hundred persons who were so little instructed in religious matters, that there were not fifteen acquainted with any mystery of the Christian faith. I hope that the remainder will soon give glory to God. I found thirty or forty persons of seventy, eighty, and a hundred and more years of age, who had never received holy baptism. I instructed and baptised them: they died shortly after, and without doubt they are now praying to God for those who procured them so great an advantage. A great portion of the inhabitants lived in concubinage, but thanks to

God we have remedied that. We have taken nothing from these people for the services we rendered them; but I must employ two men, one to help me to row when I go from one island to another, and to carry my vestments and my little baggage by land; for sometimes, before celebrating, I am obliged to travel four or five leagues on foot in bad roads; the other assists me to teach the *pater, ave, and credo*; and serves mass, he being the only one who can do it.

“Generally we eat but one meal a day, and that consists of oat or barley bread with cheese or salt butter. Sometimes we pass whole days without eating, because we find nothing, particularly when we have to cross deserts and uninhabited mountains. It would doubtless be rendering a great service to God to send to this country good evangelical laborers who knew the language of the islands well, and who moreover knew how to bear hunger, thirst, and to lie upon the ground.”

In another letter which this worthy son of St. Vincent wrote to him in 1654, he told him in substance, that he had visited the islands of Vista, Canna, Egga, and Skia, and several parts of the continent; that the part of the island of Vista, which belonged to Captain Clanrenald, was entirely converted, with the exception of two men, who, to sin more at their ease, wanted no religion; that there was in the other part a minister who invited him to a controversy by letters, but feared a public discussion; that for himself he hoped to meet with good success. He added that in almost all the other islands many had been reunited to the church.

What he says of the island of Barra is somewhat singular. He found the people there so eager for instruction, that it was enough for a child of each village to learn the *pater, ave, and credo*, for the whole village to know them in two days. “I have received,” continues he, “the principal persons of the place into the church, and amongst others the young lord with his brothers and sisters. In the number of these new converts, there is a son of a minister; his devotion edifies very much the whole country where he is known. I generally put off the communion for some time. Amongst those who approached, there were five who had not the necessary

dispositions, and God made it known; for having advanced their tongue to receive the sacred host, they could not draw it back. They went again to confession, and then received that bread of life without any difficulty. We baptise a great number of children, and even adults of thirty, forty, sixty, and eighty years and more. There are some amongst them, who, having been formerly troubled with phantoms and evil spirits, have been entirely delivered, after receiving baptism."

Thus it was that one poor priest, alone and without human assistance, established religion on one hand, whilst Cromwell and his followers were destroying it on the other. Such a beautiful beginning made him conceive the design of carrying the faith into the island of Pabba. It was, as he admits, "a strange and terrible place. But," said he, "the hope which we have of bringing back many stray sheep to the fold, and confidence in our Lord makes us despise dangers and death itself. Hence I shall set out under his protection."

God was satisfied with the good will of his servant and the passport which he had already obtained from the governor of Pabba was useless to him. Five days afterwards, he fell sick. Bad food, hard and continual journeys, and the functions of the holy ministry, wore him out entirely. He died on the 17th of May, 1657. The grief caused by his loss was as general, as his labors had been. Happy was he in having fought valiantly, and died with his arms in his hands.

Whilst this true missionary was laboring in the Hebrides, Mr. Le Blanc, his companion, exercised himself at one time upon the sea coasts, at another in the mountains of Scotland. With the exception of the dangers, which were much greater in the country which had fallen to his lot, his life and labors were very similar to those of his colleague. Almost without any nourishment, except oat bread, he visited the towns and villages, strengthened the Catholics, confounded and converted a considerable number of sectarians. Heaven appeared to authorise his mission by events which seemed miraculous.

The noise of these events, and the conversions by which they were followed, terrified the Protestant ministers. They

had recourse to the lord protector, the name given to Cromwell, and in 1655, they obtained from him an order, by which the English magistrate who held the office of prætor in Scotland, was directed to make an exact search for all Roman priests, to labor without delay to bring them to trial, and to condemn them to death. The order was punctually executed; and as it gave to the prætor a right to enter wherever he pleased, he searched so well every nook and corner of Hurley, that he discovered there three Catholic priests. Le Blanc was one of them. He had done much good, hence they must naturally have been badly disposed towards him. He was carried to the prison of Aberdeen, where it was supposed he would not languish long. Vincent, who heard the news soon afterwards, looked upon that dear brother as a victim destined to death, and he had no doubt that death would be preceded by very ill treatment.

That ill treatment was reduced, by a singular providence of God, to five or six months' imprisonment. To condemn a priest to death, it was necessary, according to the laws of the time, that he should be convicted of having said mass, or performed some other function of the ministry. Le Blanc had taken his measures so well, that there was not in all Scotland a single man who had surprised him in this pretended crime. There was indeed one witness who deposed against him; but in addition to his testimony being so ambiguous that the judges, although prejudiced, could not rely upon his deposition, he retracted, when confronted with the prisoner, being unwilling, as he afterwards acknowledged, to be the cause of the ruin of an honest man. In consequence, this good priest was set at liberty, but with the strange condition, that if he should preach, instruct, or even baptise any one, he should be hung upon the spot, without any other form of trial.

This terrible sentence was for this apostolical man like that of the synagogue against the first disciples of the Saviour. After their example, the virtuous missionary left that canton to go into another; he retired into the mountains of Scotland, and labored there as he had done before.

His detention had not absolutely arrested the progress of the

gospel in that country. St. Vincent, whose zeal redoubled in proportion as the strength of his body decayed, had correctly judged that in a region where the hour of darkness had arrived, his two first priests could only labor at intervals. For this reason he had sent them a reinforcement in 1653. This second choice was no less happy than the first. The reader can judge by the following letter. It is from Mr. Lunsden, who, being born in Ireland with good dispositions, had increased them very much under the guidance of our saint. This letter, which Vincent received in 1654, and consequently preceded the rigorous edicts of which we have just spoken, was conceived in these terms :

“ God gives a very great blessing to the mission which we make in the low country, and I can say that the inhabitants, rich as well as poor, have never been, from the time they fell into heresy, so well disposed to receive the truth, and to be converted to our holy faith. We every day receive many who come to abjure their errors, and some even of very high rank. In addition to this, we labor to confirm the Catholics by the word of God and the administration of the sacraments. On Easter day, I was in the house of a nobleman, where more than fifty persons went to communion, amongst whom there were twenty new converts. The success of our missions is a cause of great jealousy to the ministers. . . . But we place our confidence in the goodness of the Lord.”

Three years afterwards, the same priest wrote to our saint that the northern parts of Scotland were much better disposed to receive the true faith, than they had been before ; that he had undertaken a voyage to the Orkney islands, had already visited Moravia, Rosse, Suther, Candia, and Cathanisia, where there had not been a priest for a long time, and scarcely a Catholic ; that, at the solicitation of an excellent man, he was upon the point of establishing himself for some time in the last place, when the rigorous orders of Cromwell were published ; that the preacher, who was much opposed to him, sought his destruction ; and that fear had forced him to seek an asylum until he could see how the persecution would end. “ I cannot,” adds he in conclusion, “ write to you more in detail the situ-

ation of our affairs, lest my letters should fall into the hands of our enemies."

Vincent already knew the extreme danger in which his missionaries were placed after the edicts of the protector. His tenderness for them induced him to send a person to London, to confer with the ambassador of Louis XIV, and open by his credit and counsel some route into Scotland. The circumstances were unfavorable. Cromwell made all tremble upon sea and land; and he was more than ever embittered against the Catholics, by whom he could be considered only as a detestable usurper. Hence the ambassador was the first to urge this missionary, in whose favor the most distinguished persons had written to him, to quit immediately a city, in which a moment's delay might cost him his life. Our saint offered himself to God for his priests. He redoubled his prayers for their preservation, and caused others to do the same. And there is reason to believe, that, if in spite of the emissaries of the tyrant of Great Britain, a hair of their heads was not lost, it was owing to the sighs and prayers of Vincent of Paul.

HISTORY OF THE DEVOTION TO ST. VINCENT.

Notwithstanding the precautions which our saint always took to conceal his virtues, they have transpired; and a writer who improperly accuses the children of having been ashamed of the glory of their father, takes pleasure in acknowledging that "few persons of his condition have acquired a greater reputation." Time did not weaken a reputation so justly merited, and miracles of every description confirmed it every year. This first gave rise to the thought of his beatification. The news, which soon spread through the provinces, gave delight to all those who loved the church. Kings and princes united with their subjects in soliciting Clement XI to commence that great work. Hence, in a few years, letters were written by the king of France, the king and queen of England, the duke of Lorraine, the grand duke of Tuscany, the doge and the republic of Genoa, and a number of cardinals. As to the bishops, as they were too numerous to give their

names here, I shall be contented with saying, that to almost all those of the kingdom were added those of Poland, Spain, Italy, and Great Britain; and that those who had not always agreed well in other matters, such as Bossuet, Fénelon, Montgaillard, celebrated with one concert the hope and charity of the servant of God. The assembly of 1705, at which the Cardinal de Noailles presided, did in a body what the other prelates had done in their diocesses. The chapters of Notre-Dame and Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois followed the same example. The city of Paris, represented by its provost and magistrates, wrote also, and in a manner worthy of itself and of the great man whose glory it wished to promote. To these letters were added those of the first superiors of the Christian Doctrine, the Oratory, and St. Sulpice; of the abbots of St. Genevieve, Grandmont, Prémontré, St. Antoine, Rengéval, and of Bonfay; of the generals of the congregations of Saint-Maur, Saint-Vanne, the Minerva, the Minims, the Carmelites, &c.

It would be an error to imagine that these letters were but common place, letters containing a great deal in general without saying any thing in particular. Of all those which remain, and which the pope had printed at Rome in 1709, there is scarcely one that does not relate facts connected with the writers. Thus it was that the king of England backs his entreaties by the services which Vincent rendered to his kingdoms of Scotland and Ireland in the most stormy times. And he might have added, that of those who rendered these important services, one languished for a long time in prison, by order of the parricide Cromwell; the other was barbarously killed under the eyes of his own mother. It was thus also that the duke of Lorraine said that "the memory of this great servant of God was in very great veneration amongst the people of his states, in gratitude for the temporal and spiritual succor which they received from him in the most dreadful times." Finally, it was thus that the magistrates of Paris, whose letter is one of the most beautifully written on the subject, after having spoken of the heroic virtues which Vincent of Paul practised for more than

fifty years in the capital, the sweet odor of Jesus Christ which he spread in so many ways, the reputation of sanctity in which he died, continues in these terms: "Is there, holy father, a species of wretchedness for which Vincent of Paul has not provided a remedy? The Sisters of Charity, of whom he was the institutor, and who have more than thirty-five houses in Paris, and nearly three hundred in and out of the kingdom, instruct the children of the poor, and render them the most humiliating services in their own huts or in the hospitals, with a charity, a modesty, an address by which the rich are as much edified as the poor are instructed and relieved. Poor families have a sure resource in those confraternities, the plan of which he laid, and which are established in almost all the parishes of this city, and what is more, not only in most cities, but also in almost all the towns and many of the villages of the kingdom. Has a fire caused devastation? a flood or sterility desolated a province? A regular assembly of ladies most distinguished by their birth, and still more by their piety, formed by the exertions of this most charitable priest, and guided by the general superiors of the mission, his successors, consecrate one day of the week to examine into and relieve their necessities. It is he who continues to be a father to an infinite number of poor, abandoned and exposed children, a number truly prodigious in this city, in consequence of the compassion which he had, and with which he inspired others for them. That compassion, of which the poor beings condemned to the galleys every day experience the effects. We tell you, holy father, only a part of what we see."

The letter of the clergy of France was still more spirited. The Cardinal de Noailles, after having remarked that it belongs to the apostolic see to take information on the life and morals of those who are sought to be placed in the number of the saints, says in direct terms, that Vincent of Paul is one of those whose canonization the general assembly thinks it can loudly and fearlessly ask: *Illumque vobis expendendum non timide proponimus*. He adds that the life of this holy priest was a prodigy, *vita pro ostento fuit*, and that all France

was filled with the fame of his sanctity; that there is great difficulty to prevent the people from paying him a veneration which would be blameable if it were precipitate: *Sanctitatis fama Gallias latè implet, tantæque celebritate percubuit, ut immaturi piorum hominum cultus, vix ac ne vix quidem possint cohiberi.* He concludes with these beautiful words, so expressive of esteem and veneration. Be pleased then, holy father, to listen to our wishes and those of the people. Decree for Vincent the honors which he so well merited. Erect altars to him; it is erecting them to religion. *Nostris ergo ac populo- rum precibus optatisque annue, beatissime pater, debitos Vincentio decerne honores, et triumphum impera religionis.*

Whilst these letters were writing, the commissaries appointed in 1704, by his eminence, were laboring at the process of information; and this task occupied them more than eighteen months. Although Vincent had been dead forty-five years, one hundred and eighty-eight witnesses were found, who did justice to his memory; and those witnesses, joined to the bishops who wrote in his favor, and who had known him, either themselves, or through those who had conversed with him, formed such a complete body of proof, that it was thought that the affair would be finished almost as soon as it was commenced. But precipitation is not a fault of the court of Rome. Multiplied solicitations seemed to redouble its vigilance. It replied that what is well done, is done soon enough.

It was only in 1708, that the process verbal was sent to Rome. To it was added another, *de non cultu*, in which it was proved that the church of France, great as was her zeal for the canonization of Vincent of Paul, had not anticipated the judgment of the holy see, and that neither the priests of the mission, nor any person in office had paid him the honors which are rendered to canonized saints. These two documents, which, according to the usage of the congregation of rites, should not be opened till after the lapse of ten years, were examined the same year. To this favor, which the holy father granted, no doubt, to the entreaties of so many sovereigns, cardinals, and bishops, who begged him to crown

the merits of one of the most holy priests that the church ever possessed, he added another, which was to name as reporter of the cause, Cardinal de la Tremouilles.

As these documents, drawn up by the ordinary, only serve to induce an examination at Rome, as to whether the cause deserves to be undertaken; as soon as the holy see had judged that that of Vincent of Paul could be entered upon, Cardinal Carpini expedited in the name of the sovereign pontiff, remissorial and compulsory letters.* They were addressed to Cardinal de Noailles, to Artus de Lionne, bishop of Rosalia, and Humbert Ancelin, former bishop of Tulles. By these letters, the three prelates, of whom at least two must always act together, were charged to draw up, in the space of a year, the process *in genere*.

Although this process *in genere*, decides little fundamentally, it serves to prove that the reputation of the subject in question is still maintained, and that from the time of the first proceedings, nothing has occurred to prevent their continuation. Only fourteen witnesses were heard, at the head of whom were Cæsar d'Estrées, cardinal of the holy church, and Jean Baptiste Chevalier, subdean of the great chamber of parliament, &c. Their depositions, which were only to be general, were unanimous. All declared upon oath that the eminent virtues of Vincent of Paul had conciliated the respect of the city, the court, and all France; that the noise of his miracles was more and more spread abroad, and that his tomb was honored by a great concourse of people.

For fear of losing sight of witnesses of such weight as Mr. de Lamoignon, permission was obtained from the pope to receive detailed depositions of old persons and valetudinarians. The commission was given to the three before mentioned prelates. They had but six months for this new process, and it became necessary to ask for six more. Sixty-one witnesses presented themselves, of from sixty to eighty years of age,

* Remissorial letters are those of the commission. Compulsory letters permit a recourse to the process made by the authority of the ordinary, when the witnesses who have deposed are dead. This death must be proved by certificates in form; otherwise it would be supposed that the witnesses had changed their minds.

and each one had such a beautiful relation, that great labor was necessary to avoid asking a further delay from the holy see.

The first of these two documents having been received at Rome with a kind of applause, the three commissioners received orders to draw up, during the course of a year, the process *in specie*. They were directed at the same time, to terminate the proceeding by opening the tomb of the servant of God, and by examining carefully all the detached portions of his body that could be found in the city and diocess of Paris.

After having again heard fifty-four witnesses, amongst whom was the archbishop of Vienna, Armand de Montmorin, the Cardinal de Noailles proceeded, on the 18th of February, 1712, to the opening of the tomb. It may be well supposed, that the moment when the holy body was to be brought to light, was expected with mixed sentiments of fear and hope. It had been in the earth more than fifty-one years, and that in a church where a whole body had never been found. God might have permitted it to decay like the others; he might have preserved it. This latter conjecture was found true, and the examiners, one of whom was a physician and regent in medicine, the other a surgeon in the armies of the king, after a most exact scrutiny, finished their juridical report with these words: "Finally, we can testify, as we do, that we found a body completely whole and without any bad smell." I had forgotten to say that Mr. Jean Bonnet, who, in quality of superior general of the congregation, was present on this occasion, was so amazed at it, that he retired in alarm, and only returned when ordered by the cardinal archbishop to contemplate fixedly the body of his good father. This was the expression of Mr. de Noailles.

After closing the process, that prelate wrote to the pope, to give him an account of the manner in which he and the two other commissaries had acted. He first declares to his holiness and to the sacred congregation of rites, that they had observed in the course of the proceeding, all the rules prescribed by Urban VIII, Innocent XI; and that all that had been deposited concerning the virtues and miracles of the servant of God, was by witnesses entitled to credit, in whom neither

he nor any one had remarked any cause for suspicion. He afterwards continues in these words: "Thus, holy father, not satisfied with the solicitations which I have offered at the throne of your holiness, in conjunction with the clergy of France, in the letter which I signed, I confidently address you again. Those entreaties are the greatest, the most lively, and the strongest that can emanate from a heart, which, in this affair, seeks nothing but the glory of God and the honor of his servants."

The bishops of Tulles and Rosalia wrote also to Clement XI, a letter in common, which, although much shorter, said the same thing in substance. The two sub-promoters, Achille and François Thomassin, wrote to Prosper Lambertini, promoter of the faith, whose merit afterwards raised him to the chair of St. Peter. Their letter does justice to the honesty and religion of the witnesses whom they officially cited: *Omnes, say they, omni exceptione majores, et pietate ac religionis zelo conspicuos.* All these letters are of the 1st of March, 1712.

After the examination of this process, and of the rules which the holy priest had given to the three establishments of which he was the institutor, it was finally necessary to pronounce on the heroical degree of his virtues. This capital point is always treated in three congregations. In the first, which is called ante-preparatory, the promoter makes his objections. In that which follows, and is the preparatory, the consultors propose all they think proper, and ordinarily suspend their judgment until their difficulties are cleared up. In the last, which is called definitive, they must necessarily make up their minds, and decide for or against. This last, notwithstanding the entreaties of the clergy of France, who had written for the third time, of Louis XV and his august queen, who also wrote, was not held until twelve years after the first. And it was then at last, that Benedict XIII decided solemnly that it was proved that the venerable servant of God, Vincent of Paul, had possessed in a heroical degree, both the theological and cardinal virtues, and those which are annexed to them. The bishop of Cavaillon, who was one of the con-

sultors, said that there had scarcely ever been examples of such unanimity.

The decree which decides the sanctity of a person, does not decide on the public veneration. It is necessary that God should make known that it is his will that the veneration should be decreed, and it is by miracles that he is supposed to make it known. Of the great number of wonders worked at the tomb of Vincent of Paul, or by his intercession, sixty-four of the most striking ones were at first chosen. But the fear of exposing themselves to the interminable discussions of a council, which for the sake of the church, does not admit always what the enemies of the church would admit, induced the proposal of only eight, which the public voice had declared to be miraculous. Two well attested are enough; the holy see approved four.

The first was worked upon Claudé Joseph Compoin, who, having entirely lost his sight at the age of ten, recovered it the instant after commencing a novena at the tomb of the servant of God.

The second took place in the person of Ann l'Huillier, a little girl eight years old. She was dumb from her birth, and so paralytic in her legs that she had never been able to walk a step. Her mother who, whether right or wrong had never been willing to apply any remedy, made two novenas for her. A double miracle, to say nothing more, was the fruit of her perseverance. The little l'Huillier walked firmly, and spoke distinctly.

The hand of God was not less visible in the third miracle. Mathurine Guérin, a Sister of Charity and of great merit, having been attacked by a horrible ulcer in the leg, which physicians call *phagédénique*, because it eats to the very bones, said at last to herself, after suffering three years, that a daughter of the holy priest might find at his tomb the same aid which so many strangers found every day. Her confidence was not vain. On the ninth day, her leg was as sound as it had ever been. The corrosive humours which had been the cause of the evil did not quit one part to afflict others.

Her recovery was complete; and for six years that she lived afterwards, she continued to serve the poor as actively as ever.

The last cure was that of Alexander Philippe Le Grand. This young man who had been carried to the Foundling Hospital at his birth, became there so far deprived of the use of his arms and legs, that he could neither walk, nor carry his hand to his mouth. Florent Franchet, one of the most skillful surgeons in Paris, who attended that house for twenty years, having found that all possible remedies were ineffectual, gave at last his decision, that as Le Grand could not be cured, he should be carried to the general hospital, where there is a ward for the incurables of his age. Before taking this step, Elizabeth Bourdois, a Sister of Charity, was desirous of trying superior remedies. She caused a novena to be commenced at the tomb of Vincent of Paul. It was not yet finished when Alexander recovered what four years of remedies could not procure him. They passed the same judgment at Rome upon this event, as had been pronounced at Paris, and it was sustained against the attacks of the promotor of the faith.

This person, in a court where often of ninety miracles not one is admitted, has a list of objections which he sets in in a strong light. In his replies there is not to be found vain declamation, or a confused mass of words which means nothing. Whatever the most learned physicians, from Hypocrates to our own days, have said of all imaginable diseases, serve him as principles. Whatever nature alone, either in the judgment of masters of the art, or by the relations of historians, has effected in cases nearly similar, comes to his aid. A skilful person of consummate science is interrogated; his doubt alone is decisive against any thing supernatural in the operation. If he is forced to admit the hand of Omnipotence, he may be, and is often combatted. A second experienced person is charged with a new examination; his report, like that of the first, is made before an intelligent assembly, and of so many persons respectable for their honesty and virtue, there is not one who, like the apostle, does not take God to witness at the risk of his soul and his eternal salvation. that

truth and justice are the only rules which he has consulted. If to this be added the prayers, communions and sacrifices which are offered in so many places, to attract the holy spirit and his light, it will be admitted that the Roman church takes every possible measure to avoid mistake and error.

Benedict XIII, after having heard the cardinals and the consultors, and taken again time to implore the aid of heaven, at last published the decree, on the 13th of August, 1729, which places Vincent of Paul in the number of the blessed. The applause with which this decree was received in all parts of the world, was as honorable to the worthy priest, as the magnificence with which his feast was celebrated in the superb basilic of the Vatican, on the 21st of August. There were present eighteen cardinals of the congregation of Rites, and twenty-eight prelates and consultors of the same congregation. The pope came there in the afternoon; and after having adored the blessed sacrament, he went to place himself on his knees before the representation of the new saint. On that day of triumph, Vincent of Paul was as great in the eyes of religion, as he had appeared little in his own eyes whilst he lived upon earth.

The same feast was celebrated in Paris on the 27th of September; and although the body was no longer entire, as it had no bad smell, and was also one of the most precious relics in the kingdom, it was exposed to the veneration of the people. Charles Gaspard Guillaume des Comtes de Vintimille du Luc celebrated pontifically. The church was neatly decorated, but without magnificence. Twelve pictures in camaieu on an azure ground perhaps recalled as much the simplicity of the saint, as the memory of his principal actions.

There were very few dioceses in France, in Bologna and Italy, that were not in motion to show him marks of their respect. The prelates of the orders made it a duty for themselves to open the solemnity of his veneration, and often to publish in person his virtues from the chair of truth. Kings, princes, first magistrates, humbly bent their knees before the image of this poor priest, who had so often bent his own to

the very dregs of the people. Heaven afterwards confirmed the judgment of the holy see by other prodigies, which induced it to decree new honors to this great servant of God.

It was thus, that in consequence of new *remissorial* letters, of the 5th of May, 1731, the delegates, who were the archbishop of Paris, the bishop of Bethleem, and the ancient bishop of Vence, heard, in the space of nearly two years, a hundred and thirty-five witnesses, who all deposed to a great number of facts which were judged supernatural. The three prelates rendered an account to Clement XII, who then occupied the chair of St. Peter. They added that whilst they were examining the first miracles, new ones had taken place almost under their eyes, particularly in the persons of two young English women; and that of all those who had been healed by the intercession of blessed Vincent, not one had those senseless convulsions, which had made so much noise in Paris.

Although for the canonization of a saint but two miracles are required, seven were presented to the sacred congregation. I shall give only three of them.

The first was worked upon Marie Therese Péan de Saint Gilles, a benedictine religious at Montmirel, where she was called sister saint Basile. From her infancy a fruitful germ of disease had been perceived in her. Being admitted with a great deal of difficulty to take her vows, she was two years afterwards most violently attacked with apoplexy. The powerful remedies which she had been obliged to take increased her infirmities: from that time she could only walk with the aid of a stick, and with much inconvenience. Nothing was neglected to restore her. She took the baths at Bourbonne, she tried a change of air. Her relations took her to the most skilful physicians of Paris during her stay with them. Here is, in a few words, the result of these different trials.

In 1720, Mother saint Basile experienced a much greater increase of fever. A retention of urine reduced her to the necessity of using the probe. Two large ulcers were formed, of which we give but a weak idea, when we say that they were most frightful. The flesh which was carried

away in pieces, finally evinced that the whole mass of the blood was infected. Add to this a swelling that extended to the stomach, a complete paralysis of that part of the body, which had been weak from infancy, a devouring thirst, continual sleeplessness, crises which weakened without relieving her; from this the reader may have some idea of a very small portion of the pains which she suffered for nearly eleven months.

Such and worse still was the condition of this religious of Montmirel, when Jean Joseph Languet de Gergy, then bishop of Soissons, arrived in that little place, to celebrate the feast of the Beatification. He desired, that before being enclosed in a case, the relic of the blessed priest should be carried to sister saint Basile. She kissed it with respect, begged those present to touch with it a cloth which she applied to her body, and feeling her confidence increased, asked as the only favor from that former father of the afflicted that he would be pleased to obtain from God the cure of her ulcers.

She had scarcely finished her prayer, when she felt that she was heard. The ulcers and the immoderate pains which accompanied them, disappeared. There was no more retention, no more fever; no restlessness, not a vestige of that insatiable thirst, which nothing could allay.

Some days after, on hearing the life of the servant of God read, she reflected that if he would heal her of her paralysis, she would be better able to imitate some of his sublime virtues, and to contribute by her voice to the beauty of the office. In consequence of that idea, she commenced a novena; and, although it results from her deposition that this new favor affected her less than the one she had obtained, she did not fail to ask it with fervor. Her patience was not put to a long trial. The third day she felt strongly inspired to go out of her bed and walk. The attempt was completely successful; she had no need of support, and perhaps had never walked so firmly. At the report of so striking a miracle, the religious, the out-sisters and boarders ran together; all wished to see with their own eyes, what they could not believe on the word

of another. It was the same with the magistrates and the principal inhabitants of the place, who, hearing continually of the cruel situation of that child of affliction, hastened to see and congratulate her. I had the same happiness some years afterwards, and I found her full of health and of gratitude to the saint, to whose mediation her cure was to be attributed.

The second miracle, of which I shall say but a word, was worked upon François Richer, a merchant of Paris. In attempting to lift a heavy bale, he broke the peritoneum, from whence the most complete descent of the artestine resulted. In spite of the assistance of a skilful surgeon, who placed every thing in its natural situation, they often fell again, and then Richer was so sick as to lose almost his senses, and sometimes he even voided his excrement by his mouth. He relapsed on the morning of the day on which the tomb of our blessed priest was to be opened. One of his friends, to whom the merchant related what he suffered, took him to the church of St. Lazarus. Richer prayed at the grave of the saint. He did not do it long on account of the ceremony which was going to begin, but he did it so earnestly, that I know not by what revolution which he then experienced, he thought, without hesitation, that he was cured. On returning to the house, he began, without examining, to throw his bandage into the fire, in presence of his wife, whom he wished to surprise, and whom he surprised so effectually, that she was tempted to believe he had lost his senses. From that moment he worked without any precaution in his store, and always went about in perfect security. But whilst he put the work of God to proof which suited his fancy, God in his turn put him to a trial which he did not look for. One evening as he was flying precipitately from some people who intended him no good, he fell into a quarry the height of two stories. Such a violent shock, so well calculated to injure a man who had always been well, did not open his wound again, and the surgeon found things in the state to which it had pleased God to restore them.

The third event regarded a more considerable person, and

on that account it made more noise in Paris. We give the details, extracted, like the preceding from the most authentic acts.

Louise Elizabeth Sackville, a young English girl of a very respectable family, after four or five months' fever, lost absolutely the use of her right leg. If she attempted to rest it the least on the ground, she experienced such sharp pains in the hip, as to produce fits of weakness. Neither the remedies prescribed by the most learned physicians of Paris, nor the pump and baths of Bourbon l'Archambaud could mitigate the pain. On the contrary, she found herself exhausted after the journey, so that she received the sacraments twice in the same year. It was impossible to behold, without being moved with compassion, a person so young, obliged to use crutches, and dragging after her a limb which hung from her body, as a branch which receives no more motion or life hangs from a tree.

Two daughters of the community of St. Thomas of Ville-neuve, having related that one of their sisters had been recently, by the intercession of the blessed Vincent, cured of a complaint very much like hers, she at last determined to begin a novena. That course was very painful for the sick person. She was transported in a carriage, and taken out of it, like an inanimate body. To arrive at the place where she was to hear mass, the aid of her crutches was not sufficient; she was obliged to be assisted by two servants. A priest of the house having learned that after her novena she was no better than the first day, made her kiss the reliquary in which was the heart of the saint, and exhorted her to perseverance.

She was nearer than was thought to the moment when the mercy of God was to be manifested towards her. The next day she felt that her leg, hitherto as cold as marble, began to recover its natural heat: she immediately said to Theresa Xavier, her sister, that she thought she could walk without assistance. In fact she did so, and with as much ease as before her sickness. Young Miss Sackville, out of herself, quickly carried the news to the women of the house; they

assembled together; and at the sight of such an astonishing revolution, many tears were shed.

The two sisters lodged with Mrs. Hayes, who was a Protestant. They deliberated on the manner in which they should announce to her an event which must strike her very much. The lady who was cured arranged herself in such a manner as to cause the least possible surprise. She begged of the lady to come to her apartment where she would hear some good news. But in the first moments of great joy, we are not always masters of ourselves. Elizabeth Sackville did so much violence to herself as to keep from going to meet the lady, she received her sitting as usual. But when asked for the good news she had to tell: "Madam," replied she, "I have made a novena to the blessed Vincent of Paul, I am cured and I walk." She instantly arose and walked like a person who had never suffered.

Mrs. Hayes did not then enjoy the spectacle long. Her emotion was more violent than desirable. She fainted so completely, that she recovered with difficulty at the end of a whole hour. She spoke afterwards of the miracle as a zealous Catholic would have done, and testified to it by a certificate written by herself, with permission to her friend to make what use of it she pleased. Her husband who beheld all that was great in the court and city, almost forgot at the time he belonged to a sect accustomed to look upon the miracles performed in the Catholic church, as fables. He related the event as a thing surpassing nature, and it was in that sense that he spoke of it to Cardinal Fleury.

Such was the prodigy which, although divested of every circumstance that might have obscured it, still appeared too weak in the eyes of the congregation of rites. It is a new proof of what others have said before us, that there is more rigor in the examinations of the holy see, than in those of its most declared enemies. To be convinced of it, it will be sufficient to compare the judgment pronounced at Rome with that of Mrs. Hayes. She, after having testified before God that she only speaks to bear witness to the truth, declares that Miss Louisa Elizabeth Sackville fell dangerously sick at her

house, about the month of March, 1730; and that amongst other circumstances of her sickness which several times reduced her to extreme danger, she became entirely paralytic in the right leg, which was as cold as ice. I testify moreover, continued she, that during the space of nearly three years, I have seen her dragging her leg without having the least use of it, which continued until the 29th of December, 1732, when she recovered the use of it in a moment, although for a long time she had made use of no remedy, and had been pronounced incurable by Mr. Chirac, and all those who had attended her, so that so sudden and complete a cure can be attributed to God alone, and I was so surprised at it, that at the time when it took place, Miss Sackville having sent for me to tell me some good news, I fainted on seeing her walk, and remained for a long time in that situation. I passed a great part of the night without sleeping; and desiring to be certain that the cure was perfect, I got up in the morning to see if she would easily descend the staircase, and whether she would get into a carriage without help, to go to the tomb of the blessed Vincent of Paul, to whom she had recommended herself: I saw her with my eyes go down the stairs, and get into the carriage without help, and I reminded her to have her crutches carried to the tomb by a servant. I moreover testify that since, she has continued to walk with as much ease as another person, without having either crisis, sweat, or making use of remedies, either before or after her cure. Given at Paris, the 3d of February, 1733.

Signed, CATHARINE SORACOLE HAYES.

Vincent of Paul is perhaps the only one, after the apostle of the Indies, to whom our separated brethren have given the name of saint. When we walk so closely in the steps of great men, we have some right to their prerogatives.

It was not until the 24th of June, 1736, that Clement XII approved the two first miracles which we have related. On the 16th of June in the following year, he issued the bull of canonization. I shall not speak of the trifling disturbance which it excited. But I may say that when Pierre Gilbert de Voisins asked its suppression, he spoke of Vincent of Paul

nearly as De Molé, Lamoignon, Le Pelletier and so many other illustrious magistrates had done, both during his life and after his death; that is to say, he announced the new canonization, as that of a saint so much the more to be venerated in this kingdom, as after having edified it by his example, he left in it lasting monuments of his piety and zeal. The parliament also declared in its remonstrances to the king, that it wished in no way to reflect on the veneration which all France entertained for this holy priest; that, to authorise his veneration, it only wished to have a bull drawn in the forms usual in the state.

During these agitations, which lasted some time, the saint continued to perform miracles of every kind; and his feast was celebrated in Europe, in Africa, in America, and even in the extremity of Asia, with all possible solemnity. Rome commenced according to custom, and the ceremony took place in the Lateran basilic. The decoration was magnificent, and did not yield to those of which sovereigns bear all the expense. The cost would have been excessive for an individual body, if the same pomp which served for Vincent of Paul had not served at the same time for Francis Regis, Juliana Falconieri, and Catharine Fieschi, whom the pope had lately placed in the number of the saints.

In France, things went on as well as could be expected. The archbishop of Paris, at the head of his metropolis and the four churches which usually accompany him, began the solemnity of the octave, and it was terminated by Cardinal de Polignac. The most holy communities sent deputies, and the duke of Richelieu, who came expressly from Fontainebleau to assist at it on the last day, had the pleasure to find, in presence of a brilliant and numerous assembly, that the eulogium of the charity of Vincent of Paul could not be well pronounced, without extolling the immense liberality of the duchess of Aiguillon.

The example of the capital was soon followed by all the provinces of the kingdom. To avoid the repetitions inseparable from the detail, and relieve the reader by some more interesting traits, we will say that the feast being celebrated at

Fontainebleau whilst the king was there, the parish served by the missionaries was, by order of that prince, spread with a double row of the most beautiful tapestry of the crown; that their majesties came there to pay their devotion to the new saint; that their example was followed by all that was great at court; that the queen who was a subject of edification every where, was moved by the piety of a young girl of nine years, who being cured in her infancy by the intercession of St. Vincent, of a confirmed paralysis, profited by the new solemnity, after the examination of the ordinary, to return those thanks to her liberator from which her age had dispensed her.

We will add that the counts of Lyons, with the view of honoring a man who did so much honor himself to the choice of their predecessors, were anxious to lend one of their three churches for the ceremony; that in presence of their archbishop, whose great age did not permit him to celebrate, they performed the office of the first day with that ancient majesty which is the admiration of all strangers; that more than one hundred and twenty curates of the diocess went in procession to pay their respect to a priest who was at once their brother and their model; and that finally more than six thousand communions made during the octave, gave, in the first city of the diocess, an idea of the fervor which Vincent had formerly communicated to his people of Chatillon.

That people, to whom the memory of Vincent of Paul is as dear as they themselves were to Vincent of Paul, merit by their tender respect for their former pastor, the second place in his history. As soon as that city, in which it had been once predicted that he would be placed in the number of the saints, had heard the news, it was filled with ecstasy and transports of joy. The relics of the servant of God were received there, as if it were himself who came in person to visit his flock once more. All looked upon him as a new protector, who was ready to do for them what Jeremias did after his death for the people of God. The event has not belied such just expectations, and the offerings suspended in the chapel where he is honored, prove no less the tender-

ness which he continues to show towards his ancient cradle, than his power with God.

But it was above all, in the diocess in which he was born, and under the eyes of the august parliament in whose jurisdiction his province was, that the new saint triumphed. As soon as Louis Marie de Suarez d'Aulan, the worthy bishop of Acqs, had, by a pastoral letter replete with dignity and wisdom, given on the 10th of June, 1738, announced to his people the feast of St. Vincent of Paul, a native of the parish of Pouy, everything was in motion as far as Béarn and Basse-Navarre. The concourse was so prodigious, that notwithstanding the precautions taken by the police, even respectable people were reduced to the coarsest bread. The prelate, moved and affected to see all his flock assembled together, distributed to them once or twice a day, the spiritual nourishment which most of them had come so far to seek. The confessors, during the whole octave, had not a moment to spare; and every day it was at least four o'clock in the evening, and sometimes six, before they had finished giving communion. The governor, the president, the seneschal, the elections, all the communities did their very best to honor their holy countryman. The family of Vincent of Paul, always poor, but always virtuous, distinguished themselves only by their modesty and the innocence of their manners.

The spectacle which the city of Bordeaux presented was grander and no less edifying. Misery and the dignities of the world were united. At the head of a well regulated procession which went from the cathedral by a long circuit to the hospital where the feast was to be celebrated, walked the foundlings, an innocent body, which, wherever it be, owes much to the servant of God, because the zeal which he manifested for that description of persons in Paris, served as a rule for the provinces. Between the two banners of the saint which preceded the clergy of the seminary and the cathedral, advanced, with a torch in his hand, the young de Savignac, son and brother of the first order of magistrates. As he was born during the ceremony of the beatification, he had received the name of Vincent of Paul; and it was to teach him early to

walk in the footsteps of his holy patron, that a virtuous mother wished that he should pay him from his infancy all the honor he could. The archbishop, primate of Aquitaine, led the march of his numerous clergy. After him appeared the parliament, in red robes, preceded by their illustrious first president and two others, at the head of nearly fifty counselors, one of the king's advocates, and the procurator general. The court of aids, also in robes, came afterwards, with their first president. This body was followed by the treasurers of France; then came the officers of the seneschal, who were followed by the secretaries of the treasury.

It was thus that a city for which Vincent of Paul had never an occasion to do the thousandth part of what he had done for so many others, gave him such striking proofs of respect and devotedness. Nor did it show less fervor and piety. During the whole octave, the church in which the feast was kept, was always full. All Bordeaux seemed in a holy commotion. There were every day more than nine hundred communions. The nobility appeared rich in faith as well as the people. The eight panegyrics delivered there, as in several other places, were justly applauded; and were the more liked, as every thing like show and eloquence was banished from them. It was perceived in the provinces, as it had been in Paris, that in an eulogium, as abundant as that of Vincent of Paul, to be an orator, it was sufficient to be a historian.

It was not only in France, that the name of the holy priest was celebrated. Savoy, Piedmont, Tuscany, the republic of Genoa, the kingdom of Naples, Poland, and a great number of other countries, honored him with a sort of emulation. Lisbon did not yield to any other part of the world. To say that the king of Portugal, John V, paid the expenses of the solemnity, is to say that it was done with the greatest magnificence.

One singular thing is, that there is not perhaps a diocese where the virtue of our saint is better known, his name more cherished, his veneration more general, than that of Ypres. We have seen persons in office come from that city to Paris, to have the happiness of praying at his tomb, return imme-

diately afterwards to their country without having seen any of the things which arrest the eye of the stranger in that superb capital, and say with a simplicity truly religious, that they thought they had seen every thing, when they saw the precious remains of a man so powerful in works and words. From Ypres his devotion has been carried to Lorraine, where the celebrated university knows so well how to ally erudition and virtue.

Since the decree of the holy see, the veneration of the man of God has been constantly extending. North America joined him with its other holy protectors, and the first parish which was erected after his canonization, was called by the name of Vincent of Paul. Of so many places where his feast was celebrated, I do not know that there was one where prodigies did not take place, and in many there were several. No doubt many persons have read with pleasure the edifying relation of that which took place at Sens, in the person of Marie Antoinette Robbe, and which was authentically certified by persons whose prejudices would rather dispose them to weaken it; or another which the bishop of Amelia has published, and by which the Benedictine nuns, upon one of whom it was worked, were so much struck, that, to perpetuate the memory of it, they obtained from the holy see the permission to recite, like the missionaries, the proper office of St. Vincent, and to make his a solemn feast of the first class, with an octave. But an abridgment does not admit of this detail; it will be found in the large life of the saint, and how many other facts full of interest and piety are to be seen there.

But whatever idea these great works may give of the saint, it must be admitted to his glory, that the eminent holiness of his life will always be the greatest of his miracles. In perusing even slightly what we have related: "Where," says the bishop of Rodez in his pastoral letter, "where do we find more innocence of manners, a more tender piety, a more lively faith, stronger hope, more perfect charity, more heroic patience, more active zeal, wiser conduct, more complete disinterestedness, more profound humility."

So long as the church of Christ shall subsist, and in spite

of the efforts of hell, it will subsist to the end of ages, will men announce throughout the world, "the continual sacrifice which he made of his body and all his senses, his mildness, his evenness of mind, his angelical purity, his respect for the prelates of the church, his prompt and sincere obedience to their decisions, his indefatigable labor to instruct the people in the truths of salvation; his zeal and attention to arrest new errors, to annihilate them, if he could, as soon as they made their appearance; to keep them away from the companies he had founded, or which Providence had placed under his direction" (Mr. d'Angers' Pastoral, April 12).

But since, as one of the greatest doctors of the church has observed, the veneration of the saints "essentially consists in imitating them here below, and as the life of St. Vincent of Paul has been nothing else than the gospel, or rather the perfection of the gospel put in practice by that faith which works by charity; it is for those who study his conduct to be his imitators, as he was of Jesus Christ. His example should convince them of the necessity of walking in his footsteps. He so fully possessed every virtue, that in whatever situation Providence judges proper to place them, they will always find something to imitate" (Pastoral of Mr. d'Acqs, July 10).

THE END.

February, 1869.

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